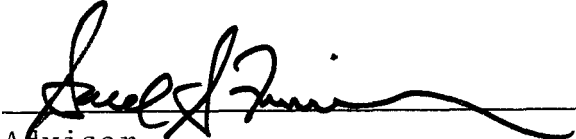


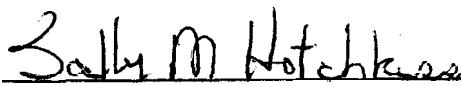
A REASSESSMENT OF T. J. MEEK'S HEBREW ORIGINS

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ABSTRACT

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This is an investigation into the progress made by scholars to determine whether the Bible contains any real history, and the contribution to this field by Theophile James Meek.

Chapter One deals with Dr. Meek and his unique interpretation of the Bible leading him to conclusions on the origin of the ancient Hebrew people. Given in a series of lectures at Oberlin College in 1933, his thesis added to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy which was fracturing the Protestant Church. Chapter Two investigates the scholarly reaction to Meek's thesis while Chapter Three looks at the studies since 1950 which developed because of Meek and his contemporaries.

The final chapter summarizes the results of the fifty years of studies since T. J. Meek's initial step into this field and concludes with an assessment of Meek's ideas viewed in the light of new discoveries.

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INTRODUCTION

At sundown on a summer evening in Jerusalem, a line of Hassidic Jews files slowly past a fountain, ritually washing before they approach the Western Wall, the "Wailing Wall", for their Sabbath prayers. In dark three-piece suits and wide brimmed hats, their side curls neatly framing their faces, they join other worshipers whose apparel would suggest that these are anything but a homogeneous group. There are ordinary looking men in plain summer shirts and T-shirt-clad American tourists in well-worn tennis shoes who gaze in awe at "The Wall" that their grandparents only dreamed of seeing. There is a bearded old man wearing a tattered shawl who could be mistaken for Elijah were it not 1985. Watching this pilgrimage from a short distance back are three Israeli soldiers dressed in casual khaki uniforms, leaning nonchalantly on their rifles. This varied group of men (the women pray separately) are all Jews, members of a culture, a people whose traditions have been handed down to them from many generations past. Traditions which are so ancient they are difficult to trace.

It is known that this land, Israel, Palestine, the Holy Land, is where the traditions came to fruition, but the origin of those who initiated the traditions is obscure. The history of the Jews can be traced from modern times backward into the fifth century B.C.E. (before the common era) or even into the monarchal era, with reasonable accuracy.

The rest is not much more than speculation. Who were the ancient Hebrews? How did they come to settle this land? Did they really follow Moses out of Egypt?

Why is it important to find answers to these questions? The Jews comprise only 0.25% of the world's population, but their book, the Bible, is the template from which the culture of most of the western world has been formed. Our laws are based primarily on the "Ten Commandments"; western ideals of justice and equality come from the Old Testament as does the traditional weekend of rest.' Both Christianity and Islam grew from Judaic roots. These seemingly insignificant people whose majestic splendor lasted for a mere two generations had a greater impact on nearly half of the world's population than others which lasted for hundreds of years.

The Bible has been the world's best selling book for a very long time but the study of the historicity of the Bible is a relatively new field. It began with the publication of Charles Darwin's books, On the Origin of Species in 1859 and The Descent of Man in 1871. Before that time, the Bible was regarded as "the word of God" by Christians, and as such, was inerrant. Many held the notion that the Bible was nothing more than the story of man's salvation by God² which gave

¹Most Old Testament traditions can be traced to even earlier Near Eastern traditions.

²Jack B. Rogers, and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. xxii.

validity to their Christian faith. It was studied primarily by theologians who saw the Old Testament as a prelude to the New Testament more than as a history of a people. They acknowledged inconsistencies in the scriptures but thought they were "few and inconsequential". They believed that the "corruptions" in the Bible were present because of scribal error or printers' mistakes, but that God's message was not affected by these irregularities.³

The nineteenth century witnessed the blossoming of another relatively new field, the study of archaeology. It was practiced mainly as a hobby of the rich and adventurous who were driven by the same curiosity as Darwin and encouraged by certain fabulous discoveries. Egypt was the source of most of these wonderful finds, but in 1843 Paul-Emile Botta's excavations at Khorsabad on the Tigris River revealed evidence of Sargon, the ancient king of Assyria. Austin Henry Layard's discovery of biblical Nimrud in 1845 and Henry Creswicke Rawlinson's finds at Nineveh a few years later attracted the attention of the biblical scholars.⁴ In 1869, the British established the Palestine Exploration Fund. The German Palestine Association was begun in 1877; the Dominican Ecole Biblique de St. Etienne was founded by the French in 1892; The German Oriental Society in 1898; and in 1900, the American

³Ibid. p. 285.

⁴Werner Keller, The Bible As History (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney: Bantam Books, 1974, revised 1982), p. 10.

School of Oriental Research was organized, followed in 1901 by another German endeavor, the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology, all designed to facilitate the study of the ancient Near East.⁵ Their searches took them to all parts of the Near East and their discoveries were not the golden treasures found in Egypt, but a greater treasure, written records.

At Tell el-Amarna in Middle Egypt in 1887 were found cuneiform (wedge shaped writing) texts which date from the late fourteenth century B.C.E. These tablets were written by scribes in ancient Canaan, Phoenicia, and southern Syria. They reveal the political situation of the Levant during the reign of Akhenaten, the Egyptian pharaoh who attempted a sort of monotheism in his worship of the sun-disc, the Aten⁶ nearly 300 years before the rise of the Kingdom of Israel. The discovery of the Amarna tablets was followed by the translation of the "Tale of Gilgamesh" at the turn of the century. Found at Nineveh in the ruins of the ancient palace of Ashurbanipal, a seventh century B.C.E. king of Assyria, the Gilgamesh story told of a flood, much older than the biblical flood of Genesis 6 - 9. The similarities in the two stories were too close to deny a connection.

Shocked yet tantalized, most scholars remained hesitant to come to any but the traditional conclusions: that

⁵Ibid. p. xxii.

⁶Ibid. p. 142.

somehow the Bible remained totally accurate and original. But many scholars were stimulated by these new ideas and put greater emphasis in their study of ancient languages in order to do their own translations of the newly discovered texts.⁷ Gradually, there developed a movement toward the study of the scriptures for their historical value. The field was dominated by Protestant theologians, many of whom became archaeologists, determined to find evidence to validate biblical stories. Others enhanced their linguistic skills and relied on the reports of those in the field to further their understanding of their beloved book. The early years of the twentieth century was a time when the desire to gain a reliable picture of the originators of the Old Testament gained momentum, yet, most theologians were still reluctant to advance any but the most traditional theses.

Interest in Near Eastern antiquities was accelerated by the First World War when many Westerners were introduced to other cultures in unfamiliar areas of the world.' In 1916, British troops on their march to Baghdad, camped near the ancient mound of Tell al-Muqayyar. It was here, in 1854, that archaeologists had excavated the large mound, sending their finds back to the British Museum. The artifacts had

⁷Rogers and McKim, The Authority, pp. 263-322.

'peter Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scriptures (New York: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 48.

seemed of little value and were packed away in the storage rooms of the museum. Among these artifacts were insignificant looking small clay cylinders which were inscribed with cuneiform writing. These had come to the attention of R. Campbell Thompson, an assistant at the museum, who was now an officer with the party encamped near the ancient tell. His trained eye told him as he looked at the tell that there was much more to be uncovered and he sent word back to his colleagues at the museum to re-examine the inscriptions on the cylinders. Their findings led British archaeologists to believe that Tell al-Muqayyar may have been the site of the biblical city of Ur, the birthplace of Abraham.⁹ After the war, a joint British and American team of archaeologists led by Sir Charles Leonard Woolley was sent to the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley to investigate this exciting hypothesis.¹⁰

Woolley's sensational findings electrified both archaeologists and theologians. His announcement that

We must radically alter our view of the Hebrew patriarch when we see that his earlier years were passed in such sophisticated surroundings. He was the citizen of a great city and inherited the traditions of an old and highly organized civilization¹¹

brought an immediate negative reaction from fundamentalists who viewed Abraham as a simple nomad. To other theologians,

⁹Genesis 11:28.

¹⁰Werner Keller, The Bible As History (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Bantam Books, 1974, revised 1982), p. 13.

¹¹Ibid. p. 19.

however, Woolley's discoveries pointed to a need for an intense investigation of the scriptures. Their views were becoming freer with each new find.

In 1929, word came of the discovery of the ancient city of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the northern coast of Syria. Here was revealed a glimpse of Canaanite culture at its height. In its sixty-room palace were found tablets inscribed with cuneiform signs. Written partly in a Hurrian dialect and partly in the native north-western Semitic tongue, they date from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E. Scholars believe that the beautiful poetic verses found on these tablets greatly resemble early Hebrew verse.¹²

Yorghnan Tepe, a large tell in northern Mesopotamia, was excavated in the early 1930's. Levels fourteen and fifteen contained the ancient Hurrian city of Nuzi. Within its fifteenth century B.C.E. palace were archives containing tablets written in Akkadian, the language of the first Semitic civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Translators found these cuneiform tablets to be mostly family contracts dealing with sales, rentals, marriage settlements, adoptions, and other legal matters which are remarkably similar to biblical customs.¹³ Uncovered at about the same time,

¹²Michael Grant, The History of Ancient Israel (London: Toronto, Sydney: Bantam Books, 1974, revised 1982), p. 13.

¹³Thomas L. Thompson, The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives (Berlin. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), pp. 21-35.

another ancient city on the upper Euphrates River, Mari, contained the political history of six ancient Syrian kingdoms whose occupants possessed names like Abram-ram, Jacob-el, Levi, and Israel.¹⁴ Egypt too, produced valuable information. Archaeologists found execration texts (clay figurines inscribed with a curse) which contain names of cities and their respective rulers which can be used to identify other sites and time periods.¹⁵

These discoveries helped to produce a fundamentalist-modernist controversy among biblical scholars which reached a peak in the late 1920's and early 1930's¹⁶ with the modernists gaining acceptance. Scholars began turning out papers and giving lectures which viewed the scriptures in a bold new way. Biblical passages were interpreted with fresh insight by theologians who finally felt less restrained and more able to question biblical accuracy.

One of the first theologians in North America to present a really novel interpretation of the scriptures was the Rev. Theophile James Meek.

¹⁴Grant, History, p. 13.

¹⁵Georgio Buccellati, Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria (Rome: Istituto Di Studi Del Vicino Oriente, University De Roma, 1967), pp. 25-27.

¹⁶Rogers and McKim, The Authority, p. 348.

CHAPTER I

MEEK

In 1933, Theophile James Meek, Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Toronto, presented seminal papers at the Haskell Lectures at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. It was in these lectures that Dr. Meek proposed his novel thesis on Hebrew origins.

Dr. Meek was born in Port Stanley, Ontario on November 17, 1881, a son of James and Sarah Freele Meek. He received his B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1903, and a B.D. from McCormick Theological Seminary of Chicago in 1915, his studies reflecting his Christian devotion and upbringing. He continued his studies in the United States at the University of Chicago, and in Germany at the Universities of Marburg and of Berlin. He then taught at the Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois until offered a position at the University of Toronto, where he was eventually made head of the Department of Oriental Languages. Dr. Meek was later elevated to the status of Professor Emeritus at that university.

Professor Meek was one of four translators of the Old Testament for The Bible: An American Translation,¹⁷ which

¹⁷Published by the University of Chicago Press in 1927, revised in 1935.

was considered a notable achievement in twentieth century translations.¹⁸ His skill in ancient Semitic languages brought him the invitation to translate the "Code of Hammurabi", the "middle Assyrian Laws", "Mesopotamian Legal Documents", and the "Neo Babylonian Laws" for James B. Pritchard's Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament.

A dedicated scholar, Dr. Meek devoted himself wholeheartedly to study and research as well as teaching and was remembered by his students for his insistence upon precision. His work and renown as a scholar earned the University of Toronto the reputation as a center of Oriental Studies in North America. He was recognized as one of the leading figures on the North American continent in Biblical Hebrew, Akkadian, and related subjects.²⁰ By the time of his retirement from the University of Toronto in 1952, he had written 82 books and articles²¹ which mirrored his religious character, historic interests, and philological studies in Semitics. The Haskell Lectures must have been a high point in his career, for the resulting book, published in

¹⁸W. S. McCullough, editor, The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of T. J. Meek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. ix.

¹⁹James B. Pritchard, The Ancient Near East, An Anthropology of Texts and Pictures, Vol. I (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 138-170.

²⁰McCullough, Seed, p. ix.

²¹Ibid. pp. 191-197. See also Who's Who Among American Authors, p. 992.

1937, titled Hebr̄w Origins was one of his best known works. The interest in biblical scholarship never waned. Professor Meek's Hebrew Origins was twice revised, the latest revision in 1960, and was required supplemental reading at many colleges and universities for at least thirty years. In this work he made some of the most original interpretations on the historicity of the biblical narratives of his time, and helped to launch full scale studies into the history of the Jews and their contemporaries. Studies which have been enhanced further by sociologists, philologists, anthropologists, and scholars from other fields who add new dimension to this study, and to the knowledge of near Eastern history.

Using as many of these multi-discipline studies as were available to him, Professor Meek concluded that the Hebrew people were "born" out of the "complexity of ethnic stocks that went into the making of the so-called Semitic peoples".²² The "complexity" was a result of a great influx of peoples into the Syria/Palestine area during the second millenium.²³ Hurrians (the Horites of the Bible), Gutians, Elamites, Hittites, and Amorites came in from the north, east, and west, taking advantage of the constant conflict of the existing city states to infiltrate the entire Levant.

²²T. J. Meek, Hebrew Origins (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1936, revised 1950 and 1960), p. 6.

²³All dates following will be before the common era unless noted otherwise.

Meek emphasized that "the period around 1750 was a most unsettled one in the Near East, with a multitude of little states in continual conflict with one another and frequently changing status".²⁴ Another group known as the Hyksos, a conglomerate mass of heterogeneous elements"²⁵ marched through, becoming strong enough to penetrate all the way into Egypt, subduing the Egyptians and gaining political control until Pharaoh Amosis was able to drive them out in the sixteenth century.

Meek noted that in the Larsa Dynasty, cuneiform texts from the end of the twentieth century, the word "ḫabiru" was found. Later texts of nineteenth century Asia Minor, the Mari letters of the eighteenth century, fifteenth century Nuzi texts, fifteenth and fourteenth century Hittite texts from Boghaz-koi in Anatolia, the Tell el-Amarna letters from Egypt of the fourteenth century, the Assyrian texts of the twelfth century, and a Babylonian text of the eleventh century²⁶ also speak of the habiru. Meek defined this name as a rebellious, wandering, alien people who seem to be everywhere, but never welcome. He believed this term represented different nationalities, non-Semitic as well as Semites, "with a tendency for the latter to predominate."²⁷ Equating

²⁴Meek, Origins, p. 3.

²⁵Ibid. p. 5.

²⁶Ibid. p. 9.

²⁷Ibid. p. 13.

the name with "Hebrew" (ibri), he believed it was derived from the Hebrew word "abar" which means "to cross" or "the crosser" (nomad).²⁸ He stated that this name, ḥabiru, which began as an appellative "with no ethnic connotation whatever" became the name of the specific group of people "whom we know as the Hebrews".²⁹ The name of the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrew nation, Eber, (the great, great grandfather of Abraham) he claimed, was from the same root.

Dr. Meek presumed that Abraham, the first person to be called a Hebrew,³⁰ entered the upper Tigris-Euphrates area with one of the migrations of Hurrians in 1750, not as conquerors but immigrants who lived on friendly terms with the indigenous people. The Hebrews settled in Canaan but maintained connections with the original stock in the upper Euphrates River region, as evidenced by the biblical story regarding the importation of a wife for Isaac from Haran³¹ and Jacob's return to Haran for his wives³². Meek saw many analogies in the biblical stories of the early Hebrew Patriarchs with Hurrian writings. Traditions such as the inalienability of real property as illustrated by Rachel's

²⁸Ibid. p. 7.

²⁹Ibid. p. 14.

³⁰Genesis 14:13.

³¹Genesis 24.

³²Genesis 29.

theft of her father's teraphim³³ and Jacob's purchase of Esau's birthright³⁴ he felt showed similarities to those described in tablets dating from the fifteenth century found at Nuzi in Mesopotamia.

Meek also saw a similarity in the laws of the Hurr'ians and the Hebrews, concluding that the "Hebrews were in part of Hurrian extraction".³⁵ He found that the Hebrew laws showed Babylonian influence, as well, but explained that Canaanite laws were drawn from the Babylonian laws (Hammurabi's Code) so that the Babylonian influence that is found in the Hebrew law came by way of the Canaanite law and not directly from the Babylonian. He recognized very little, if any, influence of the Hittite or Assyrian laws, hinting at the strength of Hebrew associations with these different peoples. His conclusion was that the Hebrews borrowed from the Hurrian and Canaanite legal codes, adapting the laws to suit their own particular needs.³⁶

A part of this initial influx of Hebrews was carried down into Egypt with the Hyksos, said Meek, accounting for the biblical story of Abraham's visit to Egypt³⁷ and Joseph's

³³Genesis 31:19.

³⁴Genesis 25:31-4.

³⁵Meek, Origins, p. 80.

³⁶Ibid. p. 81.

³⁷Genesis 12:10ff.

sojourn there.³⁸ The Hyksos were expelled from Egypt around 1560 and Meek assumed that the Hebrews left with them, for they would have been unwelcome under the new Egyptian regime. However, Meek emphasized, this was not the Exodus of the Bible.

Returning to the highlands around the Jordan River, they rejoined kinsmen who had remained behind. Meek noted that those who had not gone down into Egypt were now more native (Canaanite?) than Hebrew but associated themselves with the Hebrews early because of common needs and fundamental religious beliefs. For a century or more, the individual tribes of Hebrews infiltrated into the country until they controlled "a considerable portion".³⁹ This time is well documented by the Tell el-Amarna letters which tell of the political problems encountered by the Canaanite city states during the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴⁰ Meek noted that the fall of Jericho was probably in 1407 and that Shechem was given over to the Habiru at about the same time, probably a result of this movement.

This was also the time of the Hebrew conquest of the city of Ai, Meek remarked, but acknowledged that Ai

³⁸Genesis 39.

³⁹Meek, Origins, p. 23.

⁴⁰The Amarna letters consist mostly of appeals from Canaanite princes to Egypt, begging for help against an invading neighbor or those unwelcome habiru. See Pritchard, The Ancient Near East, pp. 262-277.

was unoccupied at—that time. Professor Meek reasoned that the author of the biblical account really meant the city of Bethel, not Ai (an explanation proffered by many scholars). Bethel was about one mile from Ai, and shows evidence of a severe conflagration in the thirteenth century, the right time for the conquest according to Meek's chronology. Meek saw Joshua as the leader of this early invasion which encouraged the loosely organized tribes of habiru to unite in their common cause. Eventually, some of the tribes, "probably only the Joseph tribes at first"⁴¹ Meek suggested, organized a confederation or amphictyony. Meeting at Shechem near Mount Gerizim, they made a covenant and agreed on a code of laws which were patterned after the Canaanite laws, for, Meek reminded the reader, many habiru had lived among the Canaanites for more than a century before their confederation. This amphictyony; Meek believed, was "the beginning of what is later to be known as Israel". The allies had become a "people", and the "name of Jacob was changed to Israel".⁴²

Dr. Meek proposed that each of these tribes had its own tribal god, some based on dead ancestors, others on animals or forces of nature. At their confederation at Shechem, the amalgamated tribes accepted the cult of the bull who was

⁴¹Meek, Origins, p. 26.

⁴²Ibid. p. 26.

known as El or Baāl for their covenant pact. However, he cautioned, they did not necessarily discontinue the worship of other gods at that time. The traditional founder of the bull cult, Meek said, was Aaron from the tribe of Ephriam (Joseph), the dominant tribe of the northern highlands. Because of this, the Ephriamites became the traditional priests of the northern Israelite tribes.

During this unsettled time, Meek proposed that migrations westward continued. Seeking pasturage but not able to penetrate southern Canaan, nomads moved south along the desert where they mingled "with the tribes of Kenites, Calebites, Jerahmeelites and others in the grasslands of the Negeb".⁴³ He believed the stories of attempts to penetrate southern Canaan are recorded in Num. 14:39-45 and Deut. 1:41-44. One small band of ḥabiru, the Levites, Meek speculated, continued into Goshen on Egypt's northeastern boundary, where foreigners were often permitted to remain. Evidence of the Levites in Egypt, Meek pointed out, is found in their Egyptian names, such as "Moses, Assir, Pashur, Hophni, Phinehas, Merari, and Puti-el".⁴⁴ No other tribe, he noted, possessed Egyptian names.⁴⁵

The Levi habiru prospered in Egypt, and grew in number. But the benevolent eighteenth Egyptian dynasty was

⁴³Ibid. p. 28.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 32.

⁴⁵Ibid. p. 33.

overthrown in the late fourteenth century and the nineteenth dynasty enslaved the Semitic people forcing the 'apiru (Meek accepted 'apiru as the Egyptian equivalent of the Akkadian habiru) into corvée labor, building cities like Pi-tum and Pi-Ramesses (his spelling) which Meek accepted as the biblical cities Pithom and Raamses of Exodus 1:11. He identified the pharaoh of the oppression as Ramesses II (1290-1223). Moses, the leader of the oppressed Levites, took advantage of an unsettled period in Egypt just after the death of Pharaoh Seti II (1194) and led his people out. (Meek noted that it is likely that some habiru stayed on in Egypt, pointing out that an inscription from the time of Ramesses IV fifty years later still records some 'apiru there.⁴⁶ This, then, was the biblical Exodus, according to Dr. Meek.

Back to the desert the Levites fled, crossing the "Sea of Reeds" which Meek identified as the Gulf of Aqabah, but he does not identify the location of the proposed crossing of this large body of water.⁴⁷ They rejoined their kinsmen in the Negeb. But there was no way the desert could have supported so many people, he mused, for the Levites had multiplied while in Egypt, so they searched for a place to settle. First, Moses led them to the holy mountain of Sinai-Horeb, which location Meek admitted has not been identified but he

⁴⁶Ibid. p. 35.

⁴⁷See Exodus 13:18 for the biblical description of the crossing.

speculated that $\bar{i}\bar{t}$ must have been just east of the Gulf of Aqabah. Tradition is that the mountain was in the Sinai peninsula, but Meek felt that cannot be so, for that was the location of Egyptian copper and turquoise mines, and Moses surely would not have led his people to a region where the Egyptians were in control.

From the holy mountain east of Aqabah, Moses led his people, now greatly enlarged by the addition of tribes from the desert, to Kadesh, location also unknown, where they united, formed a confederacy in a similar manner as Joshua had done with his followers at Shechem 100 years earlier, "and many another in similar circumstances both before and after".⁴⁸

The Moses Hebrews, for reasons Meek could not explain,⁴⁹ adopted an Arabian nature god as their unifying deity. Meek' stated that it was not unusual for a tribe to abandon its own deities in favor of a new one and noted that earlier, the tribe of Dan had done the same thing.⁵⁰ The deity which the Moses Hebrews chose was called Yah, Yahu, or Yahweh; a name which Meek believed was derived from the Arabic root $\bar{h}\bar{w}\bar{y}$, "to blow", for Yahweh was originally a storm god. Meek explained that Moses perceived Yahweh through his Egyptian

⁴⁸Meek, Origins, p. 36.

⁴⁹Ibid. p. 116.

⁵⁰Judges 17ff.

heritage and attributed to Yahweh powers such as the creation of everything, which was an old Egyptian liturgical formula. To emphasize Yahweh's powers, Moses interpreted the name Yahweh to mean "he causes to be what comes to pass".⁵¹ (For this translation Meek manipulated 'ehyēh 'asher 'ehyēh into 'ahyēh 'asher yiheyēh and attributed the vagueness and uncertainty surrounding the name to the fact that the word was foreign to the Hebrews).⁵²

Although Meek attributed the idea of the "creator god" to Moses' Egyptian influence, he denied that the religious revolution of Akhenaten a century earlier, had any connection with the development of Hebrew monotheism. In fact, the Moses religion, Meek declared, was not monotheism (the belief in one universal god) but monolatry⁵³ (the emphasizing of one god to the exclusion of others). In fact, he believed there is evidence to show that the Levites (Moses' tribe) were also

⁵¹Exodus 14.

⁵²Meek, Origins, p. 107.

⁵³Dr. Meek was one of the first to use the terms "monolatry" and "henothism" which are hardly distinguishable in definition according to World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary (Chicago: Doubleday & Company, Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1966), pp. 922, 1254, and 1255. Monolatry is defined as the worship of but one god when other gods are nonetheless believed to exist. Henothism is the belief in one god as the deity of a race, tribe, and so forth, without claiming he is the only god. Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Chicago: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1981) defines both terms as the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods. Meek defined henothism as the absorption of other gods (see his Hebrew Origins, p. 206).

serpent worshippers, noting the many references between the Levites and the serpent cult.⁵⁴

United by Yahweh, their headquarters at Kadesh, the Moses tribes, Meek pointed out, were now composed of Levites, Simeonites, Kenites, Calebites, and others, pushed north to Beersheba and Hebron just south of Jerusalem. Known later as Judah, after one of their ancestors, this confederacy controlled the land in the south between the Dead Sea and Philistia. These Judaeans grew in political power until, finally, through their tribesman, David, they were able to control both the Southern Confederacy (Judah) and the Northern Confederacy (Israel). This was the means by which, Meek postulated, Yahweh displaced the bull cult of the North, becoming the national god of the newly united state. He saw the rise of Judah as parallel with the rise of Yahwism, indicating Yahweh's close association with Judah.

The biblical authors wrote many years after the unification and were, Meek suggested, probably unaware of Yahweh's origins, accepting him as the god of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even though he was not.⁵⁵ For some reason, unknown to Meek (and everybody else) Israel was used as the name for the whole nation while Judah remained the name

⁵⁴Exodus 17:15; 4:2-5; 15:26; 23:25; Numbers 21:8; Isaiah 6:2,6; 14:29; 30:6; Deuteronomy 8:15; Kings 1:19; Nehemiah 2:13.

⁵⁵Exodus 3:6.

of the southern region only. But because Yahweh was the national god, he became the God of Israel.

The peak of Yahwism came in the United Kingdom of David. This is demonstrated, claimed Meek, by the rapid increase of Yahweh names, especially among the higher classes like the nobility who more readily accepted the new cult. The Levites, Meek supposed, had become the priestly order of the Judaeans because they were the prime protagonists of the Yahweh movement from the time of Moses. As Meek stated above, he believed the Ephriamites (Joseph tribe) founded by Aaron were the traditional priests of the north, the protectors and promoters of the bull cult. They continued to practice their religion freely, even though Yahwism was made the official state religion. Conflicts arose between the two cults; rivalries which were probably political in nature—rather than religious as they were a result of the competition between the Ephriam priests and the Levite priests rather than between the worshippers of Baal and Yahweh. By the time of Solomon, Meek noted, the rivalries had reached a peak so that after his death, the united nation of Israel again separated. But by then, he asserts, Yahwism had a firm hold even in the North, so with the help of the prophets, Yahweh evolved into the universal creator found in the Bible.

Meek stipulated that the individual tribal confederacies of Israel (north) and Judah (south) united under one leader, King Saul,* only when both were faced with a common *(a Benjamite and thus a northerner)

enemy, the Philistines. David, a southerner, was able to accomplish real national unification only as long as the Philistine threat lasted and by the time of Solomon, the old differences between Israel and Judah had reappeared and they again separated.

Professor Meek explained the present biblical form which describes Joshua as Moses' lieutenant came about as a result of the consolidation of all of the tribes, both north and south, into a national unit under David. Each tribe adopted traditions of the other, fusing them into one so that the experiences of one tribe became the tradition of the whole nation. The biblical account is heavily biased toward the south, Meek explained, because it was written by Judaeans.

Scholarship in North America had traditionally been dominated by Christian principles and in 1933, T. J. Meek was a pace setter for the free flow of new ideas that was emerging in academic circles. His bold theses were an example of the modernism that preoccupied the whole country during the 1920's and 1930's.⁵⁶ As a highly respected theologian, Meek's radical theories were given careful consideration by both the fundamentalists and his modernist colleagues. He stood at the threshold of a new era in scholarship, initiating the free exchange of ideas on a subject previously considered untouchable by Christian theologians: the study of the historic value of the Bible.

⁵⁶Rogers and McKim, The Authority, p. 348.

CHAPTER II

MEEK'S CONTEMPORARIES

The Protestant Church had been traumatized over the conflict regarding the inerrancy of the Bible, and, in 1927, it adopted a report stating that the church would not issue definitions on "essential doctrines",⁵⁷ taking the position of anti-intellectualism. It was perhaps for this reason that there were no published reviews^{5*} of Meek's work from fundamentalists who now claimed that spiritual leaders were sometimes better if they were without advanced theological training.⁵⁹

Those theologians who were modernists (or at least not fanatic fundamentalists) reviewed Meek's work in the theological journals of the day. Considering the extent to which most of Meek's theses differed with the traditional biblical notions, the reviews were surprisingly mild.

Most of Professor Meek's contemporaries found no .. fault with his view of the political milieu of second-millennium Syria/Palestine, nor did they quarrel with his time frame. None argued with the connection of the Hebrews with

⁵⁷Ibid. p. xix.

⁵⁸If there were any scholarly reviews, they did not survive.

⁵⁹Rogers and McKim, The Authority, p. xx.

the "habiru". I. G. Matthews wrote in the Crozer Quarterly, a journal published by the Crozer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia,⁶⁰ "Wide reading and mature thought lies in the background of each chapter" but was gently skeptical of what he termed the "double Exodus theory". L. W. Batten wrote in Churchman,⁶¹ "(Meek) shows that the Hebrews were a homogeneous people in that they were all Semites, but that they really differed much from each other" which isn't really what Meek said at all. Batten had no quarrel with any of Meek's ideas but called the work "first rate", yet cautioned readers to approach the material diligently and carefully. The author on the review in The Christian Century, identified only as H. L. W.,⁶² accepted Dr. Meek's "admirable contribution" to biblical literature and history, while the Rev. Cuthbert A. Simpson remarked in The Living Church,⁶³ "so strikingly do these stories (of the Patriarchs) reflect Hurrian customs that it might well be argued that the heroes of them were themselves Hurrians who later became Hebrews by adoption", and "Dr. Meek has so cogently presented the evidence for his position that it is difficult to see how its general correctness can be successfully disputed". Rev. Simpson was the

⁶⁰I. G. Matthews, "Book Reviews", The Crozier Quarterly Vol. 14 (Jan., 1937), p. 66.

⁶¹L. W. Batten, "Along the Bookshelves", Churchman Vol. 151 (Jan. 15, 1937), p. 17.

⁶²H. L. W., "Yahweh's People", The Christian Century Vol. 53 (Nov. 4, 1936), p. 1464.

⁶³Cuthbert A. Simpson, "Books of the Day", Elizabeth McCracken, editor, The Living Church #96 (Feb. 20, 1937), p. 231.

only one to admit—that he found it difficult to agree with Meek in his thesis that Yahweh was unknown to the northerners until the time of David, suggesting that there was room for "a difference of opinion". He understood the Hebrews to have initially emigrated from the volcanic region southeast of Palestine, east of the Gulf of Aqabah. Mount Sinai, then, would not have been located near Kadesh, but was a volcano whose awe-inspiring activity was ascribed to Yahweh by the early nomads. Because of this, they may have connected this power with thunder storms, Simpson mused, which are not unlike volcanic activity. If both the north and south were followers of the same god, Yahweh, it follows that they must have originated from the same place at the same time, contrary to Meek's thesis of a 200-year separation between migrations. Simpson acknowledged that only some of the Hebrews went down into Egypt and perhaps after many years the character of Yahweh differed between the northern tribes and the Moses tribes, so that what happened at the time of the unification under David was "not the introduction of a new god to the northern tribes, but rather the proclamation to them of a richer conception of the character and attributes of a god they already knew, and with whom they felt themselves to stand in a peculiar relationship".

Regarding Meek's treatment of the priests, Rev. Simpson gently suggested "slight modifications" to include Yahweh priests in the north, while admitting that the cult of Yahweh was not as widely practiced there as in the south,

and faulted Meek with the inability to distinguish sufficiently between early and late material, but considered these "minor" points.

Today, not much can be discerned about the qualifications of these reviewers, but the nature of the magazines in which they published their reviews is evident. Their gentle treatment of Meek's work implies that they were polite theologians who, at least in the 1930's, would not openly criticize a colleague. It seems that they were either intimidated by Meek's academic background, or they were just too courteous to disagree.

An American biblical scholar and author, William Foxwell Albright was another of Meek's contemporaries. Dr. Albright was considered the founder of the American school of thought which proposed his ideas. He taught at Johns Hopkins University from 1929 until his death in 1971, where he acquired a following of devoted students such as Frank M. Cross, John Bright, and Samuel N. Freedman. Like Meek, Albright was a doctor of theology and professor of Semitic languages, but he was also an accomplished archaeologist. Yet Albright was gentle in his assessment of Meek's work also. His review consisted only of a brief comment on Hebrew Origins in an article entitled "Some New Archaeological Books" in the April, 1937 Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research⁶⁴ in

⁶⁴See pp. 28-29.

which he acknowledged Meek's competence in Hebrew and Akkadian and applauded Meek's "challenging and stimulating treatment" of the material, expressing agreement on many points such as political and institutional history, but differing on interpretation of religious origins.

To find Dr. Albright's true views, it is necessary to read his books, From the Stone Age to Christianity⁶⁵ and The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra.⁶⁶ These reveal his belief (unlike Meek's) that the picture presented by Genesis is essentially historical and that there is no valid reason to doubt "the general accuracy of the biographical details and the sketches of personality which make the Patriarchs come alive with a vividness unknown to a single extrabiblical character in the whole vast literature of the ancient Near East".⁶⁷ Albright was not a fundamentalist but an archaeologist and relied on excavations to validate his theses, finding the historicity of the tradition of the Patriarchs to be "clinched" by the Nuzi texts and other archaeological discoveries.

Contrary to Meek's "Hurrian Influx" theory, Albright found Abraham coming into Canaan from the city of Ur in

⁶⁵W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957).

⁶⁶W. F. Albright, The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra Harper Torchbook Edition (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1963).

⁶⁷Ibid. p. 5.

southern Babylon around the nineteenth century as the leader of donkey caravans which traveled north along an established caravan route to Haran, and along the edge of the southern desert into Egypt. Haran, Albright stated, means "Caravan City"⁶⁸ and all of the places with which Abraham is connected were important caravan stations. The nineteenth century, claimed Albright, was a time when Palestine was recovering from the nomadic attacks of the Amorites (western Semites) which thinned the population of the previous century.⁶⁹ While Abraham was attending to his work, he left his family at Gerar, about 10 km. from Beersheba, where they lived as "resident aliens".⁷⁰ He noted that Genesis 20:1 tells of this time, and Old Assyrian documents found in Cappadocia, as well as Egyptian inscriptions set up at Serabit el-Khadim in western Sinai confirm the fact that donkey caravan trade was at a high point in the nineteenth century. Just as Meek did, Albright equated the term "habiru" ('apiru) with "Hebrew" but defined it as "something like 'donkey-man', donkey driver, huckster, caravaneer"⁷¹ rather than "nomad". Originally, he speculated, it may have meant "dusty" referring to the dust that donkeys raise when traveling.

⁶⁸Ibid. p. 6.

⁶⁹Id. From the Stone Age, p. 155.

⁷⁰Id. The Biblical Period, p. 6.

⁷¹Ibid. p. 5.

During the-following centuries, under the protection of Egypt, city states were organized in the coastal plains of Canaan while the hill country remained in the tribal stage of development. It was in this hill country that the Hebrews, descendants of Abraham and a mixture of West Semitic peoples from the "Plain of Aram",⁷² spread and grew in number during the period of the Patriarchs. Albright insisted that Hebrew tradition presents a clear picture of tribal and family origins which need as theological interpretation but are in fact supported by archaeological discoveries: The Patriarchs, he asserted, were real personalities not symbols and can be traced by Hebrew tradition to the Balikh Valley in north-western Mesopotamia. "We know cities (like Haran, Nahor, and Gerar of Gen. 20 and 24) to have flourished in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries"⁷³ and that they were important trade centers. He points out that even though the Patriarchal narratives were modernized about the tenth century, such a revision "does not disprove the authenticity of the underlying tradition".⁷⁴ Even assuming these narratives began as oral tradition, does not discredit their general accuracy, for, as Albright noted, "in many ways the orally transmitted record is superior".⁷⁵

⁷²Id. From the Stone Age, p. 237.

⁷³Id. The Biblical Period, p. 2.

⁷⁴Ibid. p. 10.

⁷⁵Ibid. p. 5.

Albright agreed with Meek that at one time the Patriarchs followed their own individual tribal deities, but that very early they made the deliberate choice to follow Yahweh over all others. He recognized the close relationship between Yahweh and Moses, but did not accept Meek's supposition that the northern tribes did not know their god before the Exodus.

Dr. Albright differed with Meek's origin of Yahweh, also stating that Yahweh was unique to the Hebrews from their beginning. He translated Yahweh in only one way, "he causes to be" insisting that this is the only meaning which makes any sense. Professor Albright believed that Akhenaten's worship of the Aten in the late fourteenth century may have introduced the monotheistic theme to the Israelites during their stay in Egypt, while Dr. Meek insisted that this episode played no part in the development of Hebrew monotheism. Meek did suggest that Moses may have been influenced by the idea of the "creator god" theme of the Egyptians, and Albright agreed, noting that Ptah, the god of Memphis (Egypt) was a "great creator". But Albright further pointed out that the Ugaritic god El was also a "great creator". The Ugaritic El cannot be differentiated from the Canaanite El who would therefore be the same El which Meek identified with the northern tribes. Albright speculated that the "great creator" theme may have arisen in a large part of the Near East even before the biblical narratives were written.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Id From the Stone Age, p. 259.

Albright saw the conquest as just that, and dated it to the second half of the thirteenth century, a date that is within twenty-five to fifty years of the date which Meek proposes as the time of Moses' entry into southern Canaan. Albright contends that there had been intimate cultural and political contact between Egypt and Palestine/Syria from 2000 to 1300 with many Egyptians living in Palestine and just as many Semites living in Egypt. He believed that many Hebrews had entered Egypt as a component of the invading Hyksos conquerors, as did Meek, but stressed that the Hyksos were mainly or even entirely of Northwest Semitic stock, closely akin to the Hebrews, rather than the "conglomerate mass of heterogeneous elements" proposed by Dr. Meek.

As their allies, Albright believed, the Hebrews fared well in Egypt under Hyksos suzerainty, until Egypt rallied to expel them in 1560. But Albright stressed that there was no reason to think that all of the Semites were driven out at that time, and a part of those who remained became the Moses group. He agreed that a considerable part of the Hebrew people never went down into Egypt at all but remained in the hill country of Canaan, and that the two groups kept well informed of each other by way of normal trade movements between Canaan and Egypt. When the Moses group returned to Canaan, swollen in numbers, they joined their tribal kindred with enough force to overtake many Canaanite cities. Nowhere did Albright suggest a 200-year separation between settlements as did Meek, nor a double exodus.

Albright admitted that it is very difficult to reconstruct the exact sequence of events of the Exodus but thought that a number of things were very clear. He agreed with Meek in his assumption that the pharaoh of oppression was Ramesses II who ruled Egypt from 1290-1224, and that per-re'emases⁷⁷ and Pithom were the cities mentioned in Exodus 1. Albright referred to the Moses group as "Israelites", for in his mind, all of the Hebrews became Sons of Israel after Jacob's name was changed to Israel during the time of the Patriarchs, not merely the northern tribes as Meek had suggested.

Albright differed with Meek on the route taken by the fleeing Israelites. During an expedition in 1947 and 1948 in which he traveled supposed routes, Albright became convinced that Moses led his people from the eastern delta to the coast of the Mediterranean through a great papyrus marsh which he identified as the biblical yam suf (Reed Sea) not the Gulf of Aqabah, as Meek suggested. The Israelites established a base camp at Kadesh-barnea, but as they were unable to penetrate southern Canaan, for it was well fortified, they entered the Sinai Peninsula. Unlike Meek, Albright reasoned that the Israelites were well acquainted with the copper mines in the Sinai, for they established a close relationship with the Kenites whose name means "coppersmiths".⁷⁸ As donkey

⁷⁷This is Albright's spelling.

⁷⁸Albright, From the Stone Age, p. 257.

nomads, the Israelites of the Exodus would have traveled through the pasture lands of the Negeb and Transjordan, just as described in Numbers 33, until about 1224, when, under Joshua, the conquest began.

Albright believed that the only way the Israelites could move into Canaan was through Transjordan, where the towns were few and population was sparse. Moreover, he stated, just west of this area were forested hills of Gilead, perfectly designed by nature for agricultural settlement, yet thinly populated. It was from here, he presumed, that the Israelites won their first victories, solidly establishing themselves before their invasion of Canaan.

Conceding that Joshua's feats may be slightly exaggerated, Albright felt that there was, nevertheless, a certain amount of destruction of the Canaanite people and property, for he pointed out that if they had not destroyed the cities, Israel would have been absorbed into the Canaanite culture instead of creating their own. He explained that erosion has obscured the ruins of Jericho, leading archaeologists to believe that it was unoccupied at the time of the conquest (1224). Albright disagreed, saying the town was occupied but had no special wall around it, fortified only by the ruined Middle Bronze Age (circa 1400) wall which was strengthened by exterior house walls standing above it.

As for Ai, Albright agreed with Meek that the biblical battle did indeed take place at Bethel. He explained the Ai-Bethel problem by pointing to archaeological excavations

which have shown,—according to Albright, that a twelfth century Israelite town covered the thirteenth century Canaanite town of Bethel so completely that it probably incorporated Al, which he admits had been in ruins since 2500.

Albright contended that the division of Israel into the twelve tribal sections was not done until just after the conquest, but it followed ancient tribal lines just as the Bible declares. He attributed the differences in Hebrew dialects, customs, and even political organization to the natural geographic barriers of the land which favored cantonization. Professor Albright assumed that the names given to each of the twelve tribes were selected by the tribes from ancestral names dating back hundreds of years. These twelve tribes formed a religious and political confederation at Shechem⁷⁹ similar to the amphictyony of the Greeks and Italians of a later period. It was a federation of distinct tribes, grouped around a central sanctuary which unified them in religion, politics, language, and customs. Albright pointed out that the covenant at Sinai (which Meek placed 100 years after the confederation at Shechem) had been essentially religious in character but that the confederation at Shechen

⁷⁹Shechem would have been essential to any political power as it was at an important crossroad for trade routes. Archaeological evidence shows that it was considered holy by the Canaanites as well as the Israelites, and was an important cultic center at least as early as the third millenium.

under Joshua was a true amphictyony which unified the tribes in both religion and politics.⁸⁰

Although unified, Albright observed, the Israelites were still in a tribal society, governed by charismatic leaders (the judges) who were respected by their fellow countrymen regardless of tribal affiliation. This political framework lasted until the Philistines invaded the highlands, an event which forced the Israelites to unite under a single leader, thus initiating the monarchy.

Professor Albright studied the Hebrew laws carefully and found two distinct categories, the casuistic laws and the apodictic laws. He defines casuistic law as civil law which reflects a simple agricultural society such as Israel's before the institution of the monarchy. Although he found parallels with the Nuzi laws, as did Meek, he found closer similarities with Assyrian merchant colonies of the nineteenth century, especially in those laws dealing with contracts of an economic nature. For this reason, he suggested that the Hebrew casuistic laws came directly from the earlier law codes of Ur-Nammu, Lipit-Istar, Eshnunna, and Hammurabi (Babylon), as well as the Assyrian and Hittite legal codes. All Mesopotamian societies trace their laws to these sources, he stated, and was "aghast" to think that any of these borrowings came through Canaanite law, as did Meek. Albright

⁸⁰Albright, The Biblical Period, p. 36.

defined the apodictic laws as the "thou shalt not" laws which he traces directly to Moses, or at least to the beginnings of Israel, and claimed that they are uniquely Israelite. He believed that these reflected "a monotheistic system with very lofty ethical standards".⁸¹ This was a point on which Meek stated that Albright was "definitely wrong"⁸² in his assumption that the apodictic laws were unique to the Hebrews.

Although of differing opinions, T. J. Meek and W. F. Albright represented the North American efforts of the Protestant clergy to find real history in the Bible. A few years earlier in Europe, the modernist movement had already begun with German scholars leading the way in both new ideas and in archaeological excavations in the Near East. Albrecht Alt (1883-1956) who was a university professor, Director of the German Evangelical Institute (Für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes) in Jerusalem, and President of the German Verein zur Erforschung des Heiligen Landes, was considered the founder of the German school of thought. His most noteworthy followers included Martin Noth and George Mendenhall who published theses in agreement with Alt. Their concepts were inspired by the artifactual material, inscriptions, and ancient literature uncovered by archaeologists over the last two centuries. Meek had adopted many of the concepts of the

⁸¹Ibid. p. 19.

⁸²Meek, Origins, p. 72.

German school such as their proposal that the Hebrew movement into Canaan was "no single movement completed in a short time, but a series of movements by single tribes and bands which may well have lasted for several centuries".⁸³

Alt acknowledged the political unrest of Syria/Palestine in the early second millenium. He viewed the Canaanite city states as fortified cities with the fields and villages round about it, covering only about a five km. area. The trade routes ran through the plains wherever possible, only crossing the mountains when there was no alternative. For this reason, he concluded, the mountain regions remained sparsely populated and changed little over the first several centuries of the second millenium, allowing nomads to settle there unmolested. Alt agreed with Meek that the Hebrews moved into Syria/Palestine along with the Hyksos, and others in a slow, generally peaceful migration. He also accepted the international composition of the Hyksos, noting their Semitic, Hurrian, and Indo-Germanic names. However, Alt was not convinced that the Israelite settlement can be equated with the habiru.

Although the hill country offered little opposition, Alt reckoned that a few individual victories may have taken place. He concluded that the Israelites and others settled

⁸³Albrecht Alt, Essays On Old Testament History and Religion, R. A. Wilson, Trans. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1968), p. 228.

in the highlands Tong enough to turn gradually from their semi-nomadic way of life to an agricultural econy, developing their own civilization and forming national territories.⁸⁴ The tribes united, he said, because of kinship (son to mother) or because of proximity. These unions gave them power so that they were able to gain control over large territories. He called attention to the fact that the Canaanite city states were named after their territories but that the names of the hill country people reflected those tribes upon whose military strength they depended. Israelites, Judaeans, Edomites, Moabites, Amonites, and so forth, are names which wer indicative of a feeling of national unity. Alt concluded that the tribes were separated by the natural geography of the land. He agreed with Meek that the Israelites formed an amphyctyony, but that the covenant was a moral obligation only. It did not govern the political life of the individual participants.

Alt agreed with Albright and Meek in that the development of Yahweh may have been influenced by Egyptian tenets of faith. He noted that the "El" deities were localized at certain holy places in Palestine, but insisted that although the Israelites may have worshipped them during and after their settlement, there is no evidence to suggest that they worshipped them before that time, inferring that the Hebrews were always Yahweh worshippers who were merely occasionally distracted.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Ibid. p. 122.

⁸⁵Ibid. p. 30.

However, he granted that earlier tribes worshipped other cults and may have been introduced to Yahweh through the Kenites, although he found no proof for that. He preferred the idea that the religion of Yahweh was practiced as one cult among many, for he saw no abrupt point when Yahweh became the God of Israel, but such a religion "can only have come about long after the entry into Palestine".⁸⁶

Both the German school and the American school agreed with Meek that the Israelites adopted the casuistic laws shortly after they entered Canaan because of their new way of life as agriculturalists. Their new circumstances required new restrictions and so they borrowed from their urban neighbors. However, Alt felt that the borrowing was from the Canaanites, as did Meek. Alt and Meek agreed that the apodictic laws were more ancient, reflecting an earlier nomadic existence and that all of the Near Eastern peoples were heirs to this "primitive" Bedouin law, each adapting the original to their own needs.- The Hebrews, Meek and Alt pointed out, very gradually adopted a settled life, causing them to retain their early nomadic laws, such as food taboos and inheritance rules, longer than their urban brethren. Alt felt that the retention of these apodictic laws caused a continual struggle between the ancient nomadic ideals and the urban agricultural needs, and that this struggle remained a major preoccupation throughout their

⁸⁶Ibid. p. 74.

history. Alt cited this as evidence that the Israelites merely borrowed from the Canaanites but never submerged themselves into Canaanite culture. If they had, he claimed, "history would not have heard from them again".⁸⁷ Meek, on the other hand, believed that the Hebrews who remained in Canaan became quite native.

As for the rest of the traditions, the German school found little real history in the biblical narratives. Instead, Noth, an extremely critical theologian,⁸⁸ wrote of the "themes" in the Pentateuch which were based on the separate traditions of the many clans. He pointed out that the "transition from the Bronze Age (before 1200) to the Iron Age (after 1200) was astir with many different population movements⁸⁹ and many tribes came into the land or resettled in new areas. He found historical basis to some biblical references such as an Israelite-Egyptian connection which includes the stories of slave labor in connection with the Egyptian cities of Pithom and Raamses,⁹⁰ the destruction of the Egyptians at sea,⁹¹ and the encounter with god at a sacred mountain.⁹² But, like Meek, he could not

⁸⁷Ibid. p. 164.

⁸⁸Werner Keller, The Bible As History, p. 199.

⁸⁹Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981).

⁹⁰Exodus 1:11.

⁹¹Exodus 15:21-30.

⁹²Exodus 3:1-7.

locate the sacred-mountain nor the sea of destruction and even believed that Moses was probably not originally connected with the Exodus at all⁹³ but borrowed from another tradition.

The Passover rite, he thought, was an ancient nomadic sacrificial practice which was carried over into agricultural life. Combined with an agricultural festival of Unleavened Bread which was celebrated at a time when the migratory nomads were changing from winter to summer pastures, the rites eventually grew into the Passover rite found in the Bible.⁹⁴ After the Exodus, those clans who had been in Egypt probably became involved in a number of tribal groups so that what they experienced was disseminated in wider circles, eventually becoming a basic tenet of faith belonging to all Israelite tribes.⁹⁵ In like manner, he noted, other traditions were put together by tribes which had united in the course of their occupation in Canaan. They came together periodically to worship and "confess their common faith"⁹⁶ thereby exchanging and fusing traditions. Moses and the Patriarchs may have been historical figures, Noth wrote, but there was no common history experienced by the twelve tribes before their occupation of Canaan.⁹⁷

⁹³Noth, A History, p. xxviii.

⁹⁴See also Aram Leon Sachar, A History of the Jews, 5th ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1968), p. 28 for more on adaptations of local traditions.

⁹⁵Noth, A History, p. 50.

⁹⁶Ibid. p. xxviii.

⁹⁷Ibid. p. 259.

Professor Alt believed the "sagas" of the conquests of Ai,⁹⁸ Jericho,⁹⁹ Hazor,¹⁰⁰ and Bethel¹⁰¹ were merely stories compiled by later authors who could only visualize the "conquest" of the country as a battle fought from town to town.¹⁰² The German scholars saw the conquest as a gradual increase in population so that by the beginning of the first millenium, the Israelite states of Judah and Israel had grown strong enough to begin a program of political expansion, attacking the cities of the fertile plains from their highland settlements. The attacks, they acknowledged, were probably initiated by the advance of the Philistines who were attempting to extract tribute from them. To overcome the Philistine power, Israel and Judah were forced to unite under a single leader, a king, to lead them against their common foe.

Although Meek adopted many of the concepts of the German school of thought, most of his ideas were unique to himself. He was certainly influenced by Albright's American school, but differed, sometimes vehemently, with many of Albright's findings. All of these pioneers in biblical historicity searched the scriptures for hidden meanings and ..

⁹⁸Joshua 8.

⁹⁹Joshua 6.

¹⁰⁰Joshua 11.

¹⁰¹Judges 1:22ff.

¹⁰²Alt, Essays, p. 229.

chronological anomalies while attempting to match biblical events with the latest archaeological discoveries. The pieces of the ancient puzzle were beginning to fit together and new pieces were being found almost daily.

Interest mounted in both scholarly circles and in the general public with each new discovery. Biblical scholarship, encouraged by the fresh ideas of Meek and his contemporaries, had taken a new direction, one from which there would be no return.

CHAPTER III

POST 1950'S STUDIES

Ten years after Meek's initial publication, biblical studies were still oriented toward the needs of the Christian Church. The "Biblical Theology Movement", as Brevard Childs called it,¹⁰³ was still strongly Protestant in its direction. The Fundamentalist Movement was still very much alive, yet, many within the clergy believed that the Church had suffered because of its "misunderstanding" of the Bible. The controversy initiated by T. J. Meek continued, but, by the 1950's, other scholars began to show interest in finding history in the Bible.

The advent of the Second World War had caused a hiatus in archaeological activity in the Near East but anthropological studies took a giant step during the war years, again because of the exposure of western people to unfamiliar cultures around the world. T. J. Meek was one of the first scholars to incorporate anthropological studies into his work as early as the 1930's, but as a theologian, his view of ancient western Asian cultures was altogether naive. He had studied ancient Near Eastern languages and could quote the

¹⁰³Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 13-91.

Bible, chapter and verse, but from his office at the University of Toronto, it was impossible for him to be able to imagine how immensely different Near Eastern cultures are compared to western. Meek's view of the ancient Hebrews was biased by his own background and he gave the ancient Near Eastern people western white Anglo-Saxon Protestant emotions. Anthropologists were soon to change this view.

Before 1950, anthropology was a relatively new science but the interest in other cultures was now stimulated. This discipline grew rapidly and many specialized branches of anthropological study were formed. One of these, ethnoarchaeology, was found to be helpful to the study of ancient Near Eastern cultures. Ethnoarchaeologists study the daily activities of tribal communities to determine how ancient cultures of a similar life style may have lived.¹⁰⁴ The results of some of these investigations showed that many of the biblical traditions were still in existence and could be observed by scholars.

A recent examination into the life style of the Nuer people points out the contribution that anthropologists have made toward the understanding of the ancient Hebrews, and what progress has been made since Meek's entrance into the fascinating field of biblical historicity.

¹⁰⁴Thomas C. Patterson, Archaeology, the Evolution of Ancient Societies (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1981), p. 348.

The Nuer, an East African tribe which inhabits the upper Nile region, has shown parallels with certain populations of the Near East including Arabs and Ancient Jews.¹⁰⁵ The Nuer political organization is based on descent, and lineages can be traced to an apical ancestor (common to all clans). The common genealogy provides a basis for tribal solidarity against outsiders, but fictive (adopted) kinship permits entrance to a group. This would allow for Meek's idea that there were outsiders among the Hebrews, but the importance of kinship pointed out by this study indicates a stronger kin relationship to at least the greater part of the group than Meek was willing to accept.

The study also revealed that the Nuer have no true chiefs but recognize a "decision maker" with a talent for persuasion (charismatic judges?). This "judge" often uses the threat of supernatural retribution or the threat of a curse to maintain order.¹⁰⁶ Although these practices cannot be regarded as surviving examples of ancient customs, it can be presumed that similar living conditions would produce analogous traditions, thus lending validity to the biblical narrations.

Recently, Daniel Isaac Block also wrote of the importance of common ancestor descent as a unifying factor in

¹⁰⁵Conrad Phillip Kottak, Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 348.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. p. 351.

tribal organizations. Ethnicity, he says, plays only a small part while acceptance into the group can come by marriage, desire, and so forth.¹⁰⁷ He believes that there was a great shifting and mixing of ethnic groups during the period from 1100-500 which produced separate nations out of hitherto insignificant people such as the Edomites, the Moabites, the Amonites, and the Israelites. He agreed with Meek that their specific origins are difficult to determine, and stresses that they may not necessarily be traced by their languages as some scholars have attempted to do. "Language is a function of geography, not nationality."¹⁰⁸ Nor are ethnic origins crucial to the development of nationhood, he insists, defining a "people" as a community with common tradition, customs, religion, culture, language, and geographic position. He asserts that the existence of a nation without its own geographic area was unlikely and notes that even less sedentary tribes such as Midianites and Amalikitites were associated with specific localities, as are Bedouin nomads of today. He demonstrates that the more fixed territorial tie of the agricultural economy was a precondition to independence, security,

¹⁰⁷Daniel Isaac Block, The Foundations of National Identity: A Study in Ancient Northwest Semitic Perceptions (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1983). See also, Dale F. Eickelman, The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1981) for more on Arab customs.

¹⁰⁸Block, Foundations, p. 620.

the Canaanite societies, as the Amorites on their entry into Syria/Palestine.

Buccellati claims that the "national state" was led by a charismatic leader (judge?) but that the Israelites turned to a dynastic monarchy only because of a need for a strong central government when the old tribal institutions became unable to cope with new threats to their unity such as the Philistines,¹¹² a strategy would have endured had events such as the census taken by David to assess his military strength, heavy taxes, and corvee labor, caused unrest. He does not believe the separation of the north (Israel) and the south (Judah) was because of old tribal differences as did Meek.

Armed with knowledge of modern nomadic traditions, an organization of anthropologists gathered at the Thirtieth International Congress of Human Sciences in Mexico City in 1981 to present papers in another important study expected to enhance the understanding of the ancient Near Eastern milieu of the second millenium B.C.E. The international scope of this study is indicative of how far-reaching the study has become. One of the scholars present was J. N. Postgate¹¹³ who studied nomadic societies from the Middle

¹¹²Ibid. p. 234.

¹¹³J. N. Postgate, "Nomads and Sedentary Peoples", 30th International-congress Of Human sciences in Asia and North Africa (Mexico City: El Collegio de Mexico, 1981), pp. 47-56.

Assyrian period (±400-1000) in the Levant to ascertain if their activities fit the biblical description. Like other scholars, he remarks that this was an exceptionally well-documented period. The many historical records tell of the great influx of nomadic peoples, but also of the peaceful intercourse between the nomads and the sedentaries. Studies such as those were not available to Meek, yet have a bearing on the concept of Hebrew settlement. They show that the nomads and their sedentary neighbors probably had a symbiotic relationship, mutually profitable. The nomads were dependent upon the plant cultivators for summer pasturage while the sedentaries depended on the nomadic herders for their daily produces, meat, and wool. Other anthropologists, such as Conrad Phillip Kottak,¹¹⁴ agree with Postgate's assessment adding that, during the times of famine, the nomadic herdsmen often penetrated further into settled territory, sacking villages. Records verify that, because of these incursions, a distrust often developed between the two groups.¹¹⁵ Nomads were accused of eating uncooked meat, of not "knowing grain" of living in tents, and other activities degrading to sedentaries. Yet records testify that

¹¹⁴Kottak, Anthropology, pp. 161-2.

¹¹⁵It should be remembered that written records are all from sedentary peoples, as nomadic peoples do not keep written records; they would be excess baggage.

the nomads were employed as caravan guides¹¹⁶ and military units,¹¹⁷ a notion which fits well into Albright's scheme. These anthropological investigations highlight the naiveté of Meek's assumption about Near Eastern culture. Clearly, the ancient Hebrews had sprung from a cultural environment which was totally unfamiliar to him.

The 1950's witnessed the rise of archaeology, also new technologies developed during World War II had helped to perfect more systematic means by which archaeologists excavate, record, and interpret their sites. Such sophisticated techniques as laser assisted mapping (a technique whereby a laser beam determines the exact elevation, facilitating the drawing of topographic maps), carbon 14 dating (a method by which the loss of unstable carbon isotopes is measured in any dead organism to determine its age), obsidian hydration (the measurement of the hydration layer on chipped obsidian to determine its age after chipping), and pollen analysis (the collection and analysis of ancient pollen to determine climate, diet, and agricultural practices of the ancient cultures which inhabited the site)¹¹⁸ offer more

¹¹⁶D. O. Ezard, "Mesopotamian Nomads", 30th International Congress Of Human Sciences In Asia and North Africa (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 1981), pp. 37-45.

¹¹⁷Postgate, "Nomads and Sedentary People", pp. 47-56.

¹¹⁸Martha Joukowsky, A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980), pp. 443-456.

precise data than—was available to archaeologists before the war. Pre-1950's archaeologists habitually lifted artifacts out of context without proper recording. Kathleen Kenyon, a prominent biblical archaeologist of the 1950's and 1960's¹¹⁹ is credited with the first really systematic methods of excavation.

Present day archaeologists give special attention to each artifact recovered. They are carefully recorded, drawn, and photographed. The excavations are strictly controlled. Pits are systematically dug, leaving neat balks for future archaeologists who may have even better means of analysis. All findings are fed into computers creating permanent records. Dr. Lawrence Stager of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago uses these new methods in a continuation of the search for answers raised by Professor Meek more than fifty years ago. Dr. Stager has led several excavations in Israel.¹²⁰ In an article written for the Institute of Archaeology in 1985 titled "Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages",¹²¹ he investigated the impact of ecological changes on highland communities from the late second millenium B.C.E.

¹¹⁹Werner Keller, The Bible As History, p. 277.

¹²⁰Many scholars still use the term "Palestine" or "Syria/Palestine" when referring to the modern state of Israel.

¹²¹Lawrence E. Stager, "First Fruits of Civilization", Palestine In the Bronze and Iron Ages, ed. Jonathan N. Tubb (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985), pp. 172-188.

in an effort to determine the environment of this area at the time of settlement. If this can be established, then the type of economy which supported the settlers can be resolved.

Dr. Stager's excavations revealed a deforestation of the hills of Palestine which he believes was caused, in part, by the increasing demand for wood used for various pyrotechnologies including the production of iron, an issue ignored by Meek. The open woodlands of the first half of the second millennium had supported a pastoral economy, and was, Stager noted, also "good guerilla country", a natural home for the *ḥabiru* which most of the early scholars believed inhabited the hills. The deforestation, on the other hand, had opened the highlands to horticulture as opposed to agriculture which requires continuous use of fields and intensive use of human labor while horticulture is plant cultivation in which plots are fallowed for varying lengths of time and require a smaller human labor force. Horticulturalists use only hoes or digging sticks, while agriculturalists require domesticated animals and higher technology.¹²² The residents developed a horticulture economy utilizing slope terracing which the domestication of vines and fruit trees became an

¹²²Kottak, Anthropology, pp. 206-8. Although horticulture is the main economic activity of a population, it is never the only one. Societies usually carry on a variety of economic pursuits according to their environments and customs. Pastoralism and trade are often strategies of adaptation for horticultural populations in environments such as the hill country of the Levant.

integral part (since mature vines and fruit trees require many years to develop, this implies a long period of settlement). This economy had been used successfully earlier in the highlands of Lebanon as well as in Greece. Dr. Stager notes that the production of fruits complimented rather than competed with the cereal farms of the lowlands, so that there probably developed a friendly commerce between the two. Stager's archaeological endeavors reinforce anthropological findings. T. J. Meek had enough foresight to include disciplines outside theology in his biblical research, but such highly technical studies were not available to him.

Another study by Dr. Stager¹²³ exposed single family houses in small unwallled villages which Dr. Stager is sure represented extended family living. Most nuclear families¹²⁴ from these excavations seem to have averaged four people, the extended family may have had ten persons. These figures indicate that the size of an average village was about two hundred persons. But, Stager points out, by the time of the monarchy (1000) the population in the hill-country doubled, probably due to greatly increased production made possible by new technological advancements which Dr. Stager credits

¹²³Lawrence E. Stager, "Archaeology and the Family In Ancient Israel", Bulletin Of the American Schools Of Oriental Research #260 (Fall/November, 1985), pp. 1-36.

¹²⁴A nuclear family includes a father, mother, children, and live-in servants, if any. An extended family consists of the nuclear family plus married and/or widowed relatives.

directly to the early Israelites. Lime-lined cisterns are found in these communities which were waterproof reservoirs allowing permanent settlement in a previously dry area. Although cisterns were known before this time, the waterproofing with lime plaster was a relatively new invention. Another advancement which allowed greater productivity in the rocky highlands was terraced farming. Albright had suggested that the water-proofed cisterns were one of the reasons that the early Israelites were able to establish new settlements in formerly uninhabited areas of the hill country. Dr. Stager agrees but cautions that this technology is not an earmark of a desert nomadic population but of farmers and herders, indicating that those who built them had been settled for a long time, allowing for the evolution from pastoralists to horticulturalists. These findings hardly agree with Meek's invading habiru concept nor Albright's conquest model, but may substantiate Alt's gradual settlement theory;

Dr. Stager notes that the classic patriarchal family still survives in such villages in many parts of the Near East. Joint family households collectively farm the land which belongs to the entire clan. Authority over the household resides with the oldest living father, and the entire group traces their lineage to a common ancestor who cannot usually be positively identified. Many members of an extended family cannot actually demonstrate genealogical connections, but assume membership to the group through

marriage, friendship or even desire. A successful tribe often incorporates unrelated clans which willingly adopt the former's traditions because they are successful. A lineage increases its land holdings with each generation, and thereby its wealth and power. Dr. Stager believes these are the kinds of households which inhabited the highlands of Canaan during the late second millenium.

The doubling of the population, the advancement of technology, the uniting of clans, produced a type of life in the highlands throughout the Mediterranean which was, according to Dr. Stager, conducive to the development of large polities as opposed to the political fragmentation of the lowland Canaanite city states. In ancient Israel, as in all societies exercising laws of primogeniture (a greater inheritance for the firstborn son), the large family produces sons who have difficulty establishing themselves as heads of households with sufficient land and wealth. The "safety-valve" for a society in this predicament is the organization of military careers, thus providing a standing army, something only an organized state can utilize.

Stager's studies seem to substantiate biblical narratives in some areas, such as the existence of the classic patriarchal family and the evidence of such families occupying unfortified hill villages before 1000 B.C.E. But the evidence of long-term horticulturalists supports Alt's and Noth's gradual settlement theory as does the doubled population at the time of the monarchy, a fact which would have

allowed the settlers the power to expand their territorial control. Meek envisioned the Hebrews in a more minor role as "hangers-on"¹²⁵ to the Hurrians on their migrations into Canaan, and to the Hyksos on their trek into Egypt. Yet he suggested that some Hebrews had become quite native before the entrance of Moses. It is this confusion that those like Dr. Stager seek to clarify.

Others weaned on the theses of Meek and his contemporaries were the new generation of theologians and historians who continued in their fields, fortified with the new archaeological discoveries and anthropological studies. In 1973, George Mendenhall, a theologian and student of the German school, developed Alt's and Noth's ideas further away from Meeks. Mendenhall stipulated that the great variety of ethnic peoples which moved into Syria/Palestine in the second millenium came only from the north, and "most emphatically" not from the Arabian Desert as Meek had suggested of the Levites¹²⁶ and were, by no means, all nomadic. Mendenhall stated that the analogies which many scholars draw between biblical tribes and modern Bedouin-type nomadism did not exist in the second millenium and therefore cannot be used to compare with the ancient Israelites. Instead,

¹²⁵Meek, Origins, p. 16.

¹²⁶George E. Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 149.

Mendenhall insisted that the Israelites had been members of all aspects of life, from urban dwellers to pastoralists, descended not only from the heterogeneous migrants, suggested by Meek, but also from indigeneous Canaanites. This rebellious group formed a religious community dedicated to the worship of Yahweh during the revolutionary Amarna period in response to social injustice. The conflict which caused the insurrection, Mendenhall proclaimed, had nothing to do with ethnic identity, but was a reflection of the old established regime which valued "power more than ethic, and property and wealth more than persons".¹²⁷ Israel, then, was simply a new social organization of the existing population.

Meek's connection of the Hebrews to the ḥabiru remained, as Mendenhall saw an "astounding" similarity between the Hebrews and the 'apiru of the Amarna letters noting that the word 'apiru probably was derived from the Semitic root 'br, "to cross" in agreement with Meek¹²⁸ and accepted 'ivri (Hebrew) as the last preserved usage of this term which applied to any number of stateless persons in the second millennium.

He continued his examination of Israel's background suggesting that there probably had been twelve tribes (not necessarily nomadic) each being an administrative district,

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 224.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 140.

with a nasi (possibly prince) as its leader. When the new confederation of Israel formed, it became the legitimate successor of all twelve traditions. It was possible that these tribes had been known by the names of Abraham and Isaac, and likely a Moses group which had come out of Egypt.¹²⁹ The diverse tribes, clans, individuals, lineages, and other social segments accepted the rule of Yahweh under the covenant, simultaneously rejecting the dominion of various local kings with their tutelary deities.¹³⁰

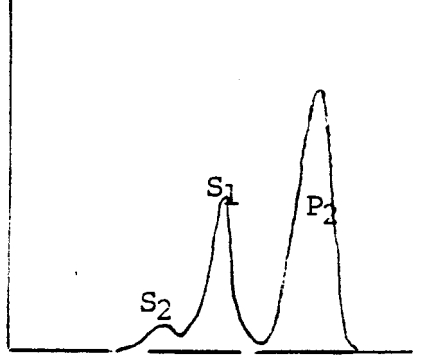
This hypothesis was a total departure from Meek's thesis but it demonstrates how far from the basic biblical story theologians have grown since 1933 when Professor Meek's ideas were so unprecedented. A few years later, Mendenhall's "revolt model" thesis was expanded even further by Norman K. Gottwald. His book, The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 B.C.E.¹³¹ provides a detailed study of this idea. Gottwald concluded that "early Israel was an eclectic formation of marginal and depressed Canaanite people, including 'feudalized' peasants, 'apiru mercenaries and adventurers, transhumant pastoralists, tribally organized farmers and pastoral nomads, and probably

¹²⁹Ibid. p. 182.

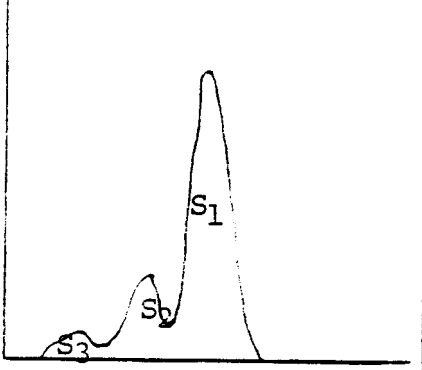
¹³⁰Ibid. p. 29.

¹³¹Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology Of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1059 B.C.E. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

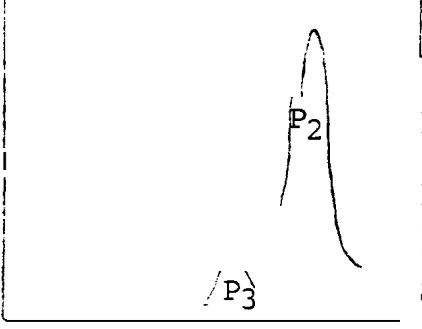
AMYLASE ISOENZYME PATTERN



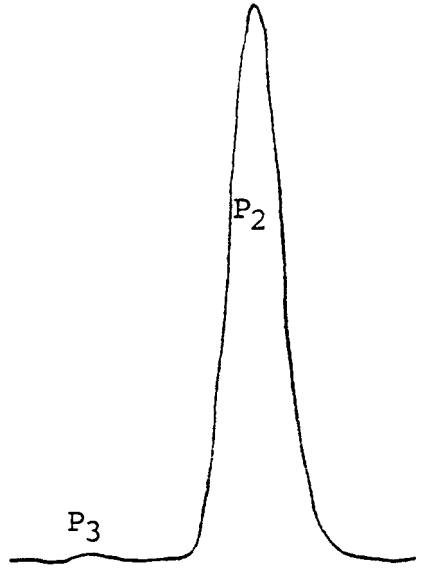
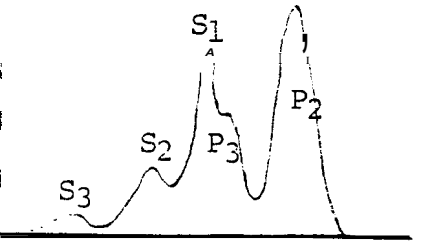
NORMAL PATTERN



SALIVARY FORMS



PANCREATIC: P₃ suggests pancreatic disease



Isoamylase Fraction	Normal U/L	Found U/L	Found Percent
Pancreatic P ₂	80-110	99	99%
Pancreatic P ₃	0-7	1	1
Salivary S ₁	5-85		
Salivary S ₂	0-6		
Salivary S ₃	0		
Total	50-140	100 U/L	100%

Fig. 17. Shows Densitometric Scan of B₂ - Primarily P₂ - Trace P₃, no Salivary Fraction.

also itinerant craftsmen and disaffected priests." An avid lecturer, Meek would have loved Gottwald's rhetoric. Gottwald went on to say that Israel emerged from a breach with Canaanite society and not because of an invasion from outside. This can be considered as a sort of expansion of Meek's habiru theory. Gottwald agreed also that there must have been a small group of Hebrews, probably Levites as Meek suggested, which had experienced Egyptian oppression but they did not bear the name Israel until after their affiliation with the Canaanite revolt group. Gottwald identified Yahweh with the Egyptian group believing that the Joseph tribes were the first converts to Levitical Yahwism in Canaan. Indeed, Gottwald's thesis seems to be Meek's 1930 thesis dressed in 1980 vocabulary. He proposed that the unification came about as a result of "a deliberate and highly conscious 'retribalization' process rather than an unreflective unilinear carry-over from pastoral nomadic tribalism."¹³²

In contrast to Gottwald's complicated, tedious 800-page search for new interpretations is Michael Grant's wonderfully simple, straightforward History of Israel.¹³³ Michael Grant is a former Fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge and Vice Chancellor of the University of Khartoum. While not claiming that the Bible is historically factual, for he acknowledged

¹³² Ibid. p. xxiii.

¹³³ Grant, History of Israel.

that the biblical- author's main purpose was to depict the glory of Yahweh, just as Meek did. Yet, contrary to Meek, Grant believed that an "enormous amount" of "straight" history has slipped through.¹³⁴ Dr. Grant considered the Bible an "overwhelmingly important source of information", and used the Bible along with other historical documents and excavation reports to put together his (admittedly general) picture of Israel's history.

He began with second millenium human movement in the Levant, stating that the immigrants were probably welcomed by local leaders, provided that they had substantial herds to contribute to the economy. The newcomers spoke related tongues, intermarried, often possessed both Yahwist and Canaanite names¹³⁵ and the settlement was largely peaceful. He agreed with Meek that the highlands were sparsely populated at that time, so that was where the immigrants settled and soon began to imitate the Canaanite settled way of life. These fragmented tribes were, for at least the 150 years before the confederation, governed by a council of elders except during emergencies such as external attackers, when leadership was assumed by small-scale rulers (the judges) whom the Bible later endowed with an artificial chronology and exaggerated life styles.

¹³⁴Ibid. p. 1.

¹³⁵For example, Gideon was also known as Jerubbaal. See Judges 7:1.

The lack of Yahweh names before the time of Moses forced Grant to connect the name "Yahweh" with Moses, in seeming agreement with Meek. Grant speculated that it may have been a local cult from Sinai, yet accepts the Northwest Semitic word "ehyeh" (to be) as the root word for the name, disregarding Meek's contrived manipulation of the words. But Grant agreed that monotheism and the universality of Yahweh came later, and that the early Israelites were henotheists. He acknowledged that henotheism was for a long time modified by polytheistic elements from the past, but does not suggest, as did Meek, that the northern tribes did not know Yahweh before Moses. He pointed out that it was many centuries before the biblical writers suggested that other divinities did not exist. Grant presumed that the early Israelites (all of them) perceived Yahweh as dedicated to their protection and formed their covenant with him. The formulation and wording of this covenant, Grant stated, are probably from a later date, but the tradition goes back to the "very earliest sources."¹³⁶ Previous covenants, Grant observed, were with individuals, like the covenant between God and Noah¹³⁷ and those of the Patriarchs¹³⁸, but the covenants at both Sinai and Shechem involved all the members of the community, signifying their unity. Grant places the Sinai covenant before the Shechem one, contrary to Meek.

¹³⁶ Grant, History of Israel, p. 47.

¹³⁷ Genesis 6:18.

¹³⁸ Genesis 15:18; 21:27.

Grant accepted Meek's distinction of the laws agreeing that the ethical commandments (the apodeictic) are earlier and separate from Canaanite tradition. They are probably originally Israelite, dating from the period before their entry into Canaan. He believed that they were enunciated orally during tribal disputes for many generations before they were written down¹³⁹ in agreement with anthropologists who have studied tribal communities. Meek's thesis is weakened by those who believe that the oral traditions of a culture can be relied upon to give a fairly accurate picture of their ancestral background as he almost totally disregarded the genealogies of the biblical narratives.

One of the most notable entries into the field of historical biblical studies are the Israeli archaeologists. Because of his contribution to this field, it is evident that Meek's influence was present even in Israeli endeavors. Two of the most prominent of the Israeli archaeologists to take-up this study were Yigael Yadin and Yohanan Aharoni, both recently deceased.

Yigael Yadin championed Albright's thesis of the-genuine historicity of the Bible. He believed archaeology confirms that Late Bronze Age (1550-1200) semi-nomads destroyed many Canaanite cities, then gradually built their own sedentary settlements on the ruins and occupied the remainder of the country. Yadin found evidence which showed the destruction

¹³⁹Grant, History of Israel, p. 48.

of many fortified-cities dating from between 1550 and 1200 over which poor quality unfortified villages were built. The newer unfortified villages reflect settlement by semi-nomadic peoples rather than an established urban population. New fortifications were not necessary, he proposed, because the country had been weakened by Egypt and by internal conflict. This weakening also allowed the Israelites easy access to what he visualized as degenerate Canaanite cities. Kathleen Kenyon dated the walls of Jericho to 1560 while Yadin dated the first Israelite attack on a Canaanite city around 1350 or 1200. He believed his explanation renders the biblical narrative of Joshua's capture of Jericho somewhat exaggerated but plausible, never separating Joshua from Moses as did Meek. Yadin believed the conquest of Ai, however, to have been etiological (this was Meek's thesis also) and stressed that-although it is not necessary to accept each detail of the biblical account, the whole must not be rejected.

Yohanan Aharoni, along with Yadin cited the appearance of a "collard ring ware" (pottery with a distinctive rim) as evidence of the intrusion of Israelite immigrants. Yadin stipulated that it was found in the new settlements with no Canaanite pottery among the ruins, taking this to mean there was no co-existence of the Israelites and Canaanites, but a complete take over.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, Manfred Weippert,

¹⁴⁰Yigal Yadin, "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?", Biblical Archaeology Review Vol. VIII #2 (March/April, 1982), pp. 16-23.

a scholar sometimes associated with the German school of thought, believed that the collard ring ware may only be a new style initiated by the shift in the economy¹⁴¹ and cautions archaeologists in their interpretation of artifactual material. Yet he accepts the thesis of a peaceful settlement of small cattle breeders in the unpopulated highlands indicating the continuation of the controversies still surrounding interpretation. As Meek did, some scholars continue to offer less traditional interpretations. James D. Muhly, professor of ancient Near Eastern History and chairman of the ancient history program at the University of Pennsylvania, believes that the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age at around 1200 provided stimulus for the activities in the eastern Mediterranean. In a five-year study, Muhly and two colleagues found that iron technology probably developed in Palestine as a result of the lack of imported bronze during the political upheavals of the second millennium. He points out that this was the time of the destruction of Troy, the Dorian invasion of Greece from the northwest, when the Phrygians moved into Anatolia, when the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, attacked (but were repelled by) Egypt and finally settled on the Palestine coast, and when the Israelites occupied Canaan. The Mycenaean sea power ended, the Hittite empire collapsed, the great city

¹⁴¹Manfred Weippert, The Settlement of Israelite Tribes in Palestine (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1971), p. 134.

states in Syria were destroyed and the Aramaeans migrated into Mesopotamia and Syria. The prosperity of the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200) with its extensive international trade ended. Archaeology reveals great quantities of imported goods at levels dating before the "dark age" of the 1200's, but shows a lack of these items afterwards.

Muhly believes that iron technology developed because of the scarcity of bronze, an import. Iron was certainly available before this time but because its melting point is 400° higher than that of copper (the main ingredient in bronze) casting technology had not been developed. He suggests that this crucial transition period which initiated iron metallurgy into Israel was responsible for events in the Levant where the technology was introduced through contacts with the Aegean world including the migrations of the Philistines and other Sea Peoples.¹⁴²

Dr. Meek never associated the Hebrews with the Greeks but many other scholars find a connection. Cyrus Gordon, in his book Before the Bible¹⁴³ points out many analogies in

¹⁴²James Muhly, "How Iron Technology Changed the Ancient World", BAR Vol. VIII #6 (Nov./Dec., 1982), pp. 40-56.

¹⁴³Cyrus Gordon, Before the Bible (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

their literatures: N. K. Sanders¹⁴⁴ and Allen H. Jones¹⁴⁵ both believe that evidence indicates that the biblical tribe of Dan had originally been the tribe of the Denyen or Danuna of the Sea Peoples.

It has long been suspected by many scholars that the eruption of the Aegean volcano at Thera/Santorini was responsible for the movements of the Sea Peoples, and some scholars even propose that may have been a determining factor in the Exodus of the Moses group from Egypt. Leon Pomerance dates the eruption at about 1200, the most accepted date for the invasion of the Philistines and the Exodus. His studies reveal that the damage to the Aegean from a volcanic eruption would have forced surviving Aegean peoples (the Sea Peoples) to migrate, while the damage to crops in the Delta region of Egypt could have caused enough turmoil there for the Moses group to be able to leave. He found evidence which indicates that the price of wheat in Egypt increased 500% at that time. In addition, he believes that the biblical account of the "miracle at sea" matches modern descriptions of a tsunami¹⁴⁶. However, many other scholars, while

¹⁴⁴N. K. Sanders, The Sea Peoples (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., revised 1985), p. 163.

¹⁴⁵Allen Jones, Bronze Age Civilization (Washington, D. C. : Public Affairs Press, 1975).

¹⁴⁶From his letter to the editor of BAR, Vol. VIII #2 (March/April, 1982), pp. 52-3.

acknowledging volcanic activity, disagree with his dating for the catastrophe.

The dating of biblical events remains a major issue among scholars today, just as it was in the 1930's. The old arguments over the conquest of Jericho and Ai, or the location of the Exodus route has been raging from decades while new ones arise every day. Emanuel Anati directed excavations in the eastern Sinai where he has discovered a "holy mountain". He cites evidence of pilgrimages and cultic ceremonies held there in ancient times and suggests that this may be Moses' meeting place with Yahweh. However, all of the artifacts date to the third millennium rather than to the thirteenth century, the accepted date of the Exodus. Anati notes that there is also a paucity of thirteenth century artifactual evidence in the East Sinai, southern Negeb, at Kadesh-Barnea, and at Jericho and Ai, while at all of these places, there are abundant remains from the third millennium. He proposes that this may mean that the traditional dating of the Exodus is wrong and should be put into the earlier third millennium time period.¹⁴⁷

Anati, Pomerance, and even Gordon can be viewed in modern times in the same way Meek was seen in the early 1930's. Their ideas are outside the traditional theses and stir the imaginations of other scholars.

¹⁴⁷ Emanuel Anati, "Has Sinai Been Found?", BAR Vol. IX #4 (July/Aug., 1983), pp. 7-14.

Another long-standing dispute initiated by Professor Meek and his contemporaries is the derivation of Yahweh. There is less archaeological support for these studies but they are not devoid of extra biblical evidence. Dr. Giovanni Pettinato, a Semitist from the University of Rome was the first to attempt a translation of some of the Ebla tablets.¹⁴⁸ Pettinato found reference to both Ya and il (El) often in the texts and although he cautions that these were not the same deities found in the Bible, it can be assumed that the traditions of Ya and El were already in evidence in Syria as early as 2500.¹⁴⁹ Not only is this indicative of Ebla's far flung contacts but the direction from which that culture came.¹⁵⁰ Even though a controversy between Tell Mardikh's principal excavator, Paolo Matthai and Dr. Pettino has arisen over the translations of the texts, Dr. Matthai does not dispute the northwest Semitic influence in the culture of

¹⁴⁸Ebla is Tell Mardikh, a large mound in Syria which promises to yield much information to clarify the ancient West Semitic tradition. Excavation reports have been published, but since there is considerable controversy concerning the translation of the texts--over 25,000 have been found--the scholarly community must wait for further study on these.

¹⁴⁹Giovanni Pettinato, "Ebla and the Bible", The Biblical Archaeologist (Fall, 1980), pp. 203-216.

¹⁵⁰Id., "Old Canaanite Cuneiform Texts of the Third Millennium", Sources and Monographs on the Ancient Near East, International Institute for Mesopotamian Studies, Vol. I, Facille 7 (Malibu: Udena Publications, 1979).

Ebla and the importance of that site as the probable origin of the development of west Semitic culture from which the Hebrew traditions grew.¹⁵¹ The acceptance of the early appearance of Ya in Syria would invalidate Meek's "borrowed desert storm god" theory.

Another who would disagree with Meek's "borrowed desert storm god" theory is Thorkild Jacobsen, a Sumerologist and archaeologist noted for his contributions to the field of biblical research. He believes that the Hebrew concept of God grew out of Mesopotamian religion which developed over at least a span of two thousand years. Jacobsen states that Mesopotamian religion was directed by the fears common to each age. His studies have shown that the fourth millenium was characterized by a rather simple economy and so the fear of famine was of utmost concern. As a result, the fourth millenium concept of god was that of a provider. The fear of the third millenium was war, so god was then conceived as a ruler. Mesopotamian religion of the second millenium was the high point of religious achievement and Jacobsen is confident that this has a clear connection with biblical religion. The conception of the deity of the second millenium was a god who was concerned

¹⁵¹ Paolo Matthai, "Ebla in the Period of the Amorite Dynasties and the Dynasty of Akkad: Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Tell Mardich", Sources and Monographs on the Ancient Near East, International Institute for Mesopotamian Studies, Vol. I, Facille 6 (Malibu: Udena Publications, 1979), pp. 1-14.

with the daily affairs of the individual. Jacobsen is certain that this was the time of the development of the personal, beneficent parent deity which is basic to the Hebrew concept of Yahweh.¹⁵²

From these studies, it would seem that Yahweh had a Mesopotamian origin, yet many agree with Meek that the Moses group out of Egypt were the principal protagonists of the Yahweh cult. Carol Myers, a professor at Duke University in North Carolina and an accomplished field archaeologist, concludes that the architectural elements of the Tabernacle lampstand of the biblical narratives reflects definite Egyptian styles. Not denying Mesopotamian origins, she attributes the Egyptian motifs to the assumption that at least a portion of what she calls "proto-Israelite" groups was in Egypt sometime between 1400 and 1200. She suggests that the formation of the nation of Israel was made immediately after the Moses group returned,¹⁵³ accepting at least thht portion of Meek's thesis.

It is evident from these modern studies just how intense biblical scholarship has grown since its unsure beginnings in the 1930's. From the earliest protagonists, such as T. J. Meek, to the highly technical archaeologists

¹⁵²Tivka Frymen-Kensky, "God Before the Hebrews" BAR Vol. VIII #5 (Sept./Oct., 1982), pp. 18-26.

¹⁵³Carole Myers, "Was There A Seven Branched Lamostand in Solomon's Temple?", BAR Vol. V #4 (Sept./Oct., 1979), pp. 47-58.

of today, like L. Stager, there has been a virtual explosion of studies and new ideas. Yet history remains an interpretive art despite the addition of the technical sciences. There remain, after fifty years, many differing analyses concerning Hebrew origins.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The intense study which followed Meek's initial 1930's bold proposals is indicative of the desire among scholars for knowledge concerning the veracity of the biblical narratives. Seen by Christians, Jews, and the followers of Islam as holy, the Bible was seen as fantasy and useless as an historical document. But, because of Meek and his contemporaries, the fear of questioning the "holy" documents has shifted to concentrated investigation.

Ironically, the research initiated by Meek's bold interpretations has shown much of Meek's thesis to be inaccurate. His "double exodus" theory was based on evidence which he manipulated to fit his unique ideas. His original theory in 1933 was that Joshua had taken Jericho from the Canaanites around 1400, separating Joshua's conquest from Moses' by about 200 years. But, by the mid-1950's, Dame Kathleen Kenyon had systematically dug Jericho and found that the major destruction had occurred there around 1550, after which Jericho remained a small, unfortified village.¹⁵⁴ Meek acknowledged Kenyon's discoveries in the preface to his

¹⁵⁴Kathleen Kenyon, Digging Up Jericho (New York: Praeger, 1957), chap. 11.

Torchbook edition—of Hebrew Origins in 1960, lowering his date by 100 years. Yet, in his first chapter, he again reiterated his belief that Joshua took Jericho around 1400, a date for which there is no evidence. It seems that Meek "fell in love" with his thesis and could not alter it even in the face of new and damning evidence.

Furthermore, Meek never explained the reasons for Joshua's conquest in 1400. He stated that it was "a gradual infiltration of the Hebrews into the country by small groups or clans" (p. 23 Meek) yet he put a great deal of emphasis on Joshua's "conquest" of Jericho, using this event as evidence of his double conquest theory. If the Hebrews merely gradually infiltrated into Canaan, there does not seem to be a need to take a city like Jericho. Nor would the "small groups or clans" have been strong enough to accomplish such a feat. And, if the Amarna letters mark the beginning of a revolutionary of "outsiders" like the Habiru, as Meek says they do (p. 23 Meek), their date (1350) is too late for the fall of Jericho (1400 according to Meek, 1560 according to Kenyon). The biblical account, though exaggerated, is more believable. Jericho was destroyed, probably by the Hyksos, in 1560 and the settlement which was built on the ruins had no city walls. Y. Yadin's excavations found many such villages. As Moses' lieutenant, Joshua could have taken such a village on their entrance into Canaan from Egypt.

Post-1950's studies continue to demonstrate the folly of Meek's insistence on a 200-year gap between conquests. Dr. Stager's excavations reveal a drastic reduction in the population of the hill country during the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200). A small population of highland semi-nomads could not have dreamed of conquering the heavily fortified lowland cities of Canaan before they had been weakened by the loss of Egypt's protection, which, in turn, caused political unrest. If there were any conquests before 1200, as Meek insists, they must have been of a sporadic nature, caused by guerrilla-type warfare - which is what the Amarna letters of 1350-1300 seem to describe. Nowhere do the Amarna letters mention any unity among the attackers of Canaanite cities.

The studies of J. N. Postgate would seem to lend support to the accuracy of the biblical traditions, for his studies find that the symbiotic relationship between sedentaries and nomads (or semi-nomads) often fractured under the stress of economic hardship for either group. Certainly, the urban cultures of Canaan were under great economic stress during the Amarna period as a result of diminished Egyptian trade and support.

Meek never took into account the economy of the Canaanite cities which existed because of their strategic locations on the trade route between Egypt and Anatolia. Without this trade, Canaanite city states suffered severe setbacks from which they never recovered.

The loss of trade was the cause of the new reliance on iron around 1200, and the development of new smelting technologies which required more fuel than bronze metallurgy. Dr. J. Muhly's investigation into the beginnings of iron technology gives this as the reason for the deforestation of the highlands which Dr. Stager describes. According to Stager, this deforestation led to the development of the horticultural society of which he found evidence in the highlands. These horticultural villages prospered because of certain technological advancements such as waterproofed cisterns and terraced farming, allowing a sharp increase in population. Stager's excavations do show a doubling of the highland population by about 1200.

Strengthened by their numbers, the highlanders, presumably Israelites, could now hope to become an autonomous nation. This could not have been possible earlier. Certainly, these circumstances provide a plausible scenario for the unification of well-fed, growing tribes who saw an opportunity to throw off the yoke of Canaanite and Egyptian control. These findings point to biblical veracity instead of Meek's double conquest invention.

Buccellati's research on the development of the national state continues to verify the probability that these hill-country villages were able to gain control of lowland towns which had lost the protection of Egypt. It is not surprising that D. I. Block's investigations reveal

the development of many small nations at the beginning of the Iron Age such as Israel, Edom, and Moab, all of whom took advantage of Canaanite disunity. As Buccellati remarked, the "national states" which had evolved into new nations were fiercely patriotic. Had they merely moved in with the newly conquered residents, they would have lost their own unique identities. The Israelites displayed a particular uniqueness which they jealously guarded. Yadin found the peculiar "collard rim" ware, which he believes is Israelite, among the ruins of many small unfortified settlements which had been built over the ruins of a destroyed city. He noted that the new type jars are found alone, without Canaanite jars among them, indicating that there was no cohabitation of Israelite and Canaanite villagers. This would seem to support the biblical narrative, yet, it must be noted that the "Israelite" jars were not found in every unwalled settlement. Yadin also noted that some cities did get properly rebuilt, demonstrating that not all of the urbanites had been devastated.

It appears that the conquests began in earnest after the arrival of the Moses group, which had been able to escape bondage in Egypt because of Egypt's preoccupation with internal matters. Although the Israelites had grown in population by 1200, their war technology was drastically inferior to the Canaanite. But Israelite battles were won by inspired people fighting for a cause, using every extraordinary means possible. The first battles were in the

hill country wherē Canaanite chariots would have been ineffective. Later, as their power and audacity grew, the Israelites were able to take over even the lowland cities which had been weakened by political upheaval and disunity.

Meek disregarded the biblical narrative which explains how the unequipped Israelites were able to rout those with better technologies. Their cunning is demonstrated by the use of spies¹⁵⁵ and ingenious tactics found in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Joshua which describe the shrewd maneuvers of the Israelite army. One of its best incentives was to have the Ark of the Covenant at its front¹⁵⁶ inspiring the Israelites into battle. Joshua's accounts are heavily laced with Yahweh and the Ark of the Covenant so that Meek's insistence that Joshua was not a follower of Yahweh makes little sense.

Meek also separated Aaron from Moses by some 200 years, ignoring the many biblical references connecting the two. Meek's justification for this separation was that Aaron was associated with bull worship which Meek believed was the cult of the northern Israelites. But, again, he scorned the evidence, available even in the 1930's, that the worship of bulls was common in the Near East, from the

¹⁵⁵Numbers 13:21; Judges 1:23: 18:2.

¹⁵⁶Joshua 3:6-17.

Indus Valley¹⁵⁷ to Greece and Egypt. The bull represented power and fertility, which are universal concepts. It is probable that the bull cult was known by most, if not all, Near Eastern societies including all of the tribes of Israel. Moreover, Joshua is clearly a "Ya" name.

Professor Meek was correct in his assumption that the Hebrews were not monotheists before the monarchy. Thorkild Jacobsen's fine study of the evolution of the concept of god in Mesopotamia shows that the needs of the people dictate the nature of their deities. D. I. Block adds that most societies believed in a cosmic or high god who had universal sovereignty. But they also had a host of lesser gods with limited power.¹⁵⁸ The gradual elimination of the lesser gods was a long process, so that not until the eighth century can the concept of true monotheism be identified both in biblical writings and in other sources¹⁵⁹ indicating that the concept of monotheism was not original to the Hebrews but was the result of centuries of evolution.

The Hebrews may have had household deities, but Meek's notion that the Levites, the followers of Moses, were regular worshippers of a serpent cult is not based

¹⁵⁷Gordon V. Childe, New Light on the Most Ancient East (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 185.

¹⁵⁸Block, Foundations, pp. 397-8.

¹⁵⁹Zoroastrianism was developed at about this time. But that Zoroastrianism is a true monotheism is questionable for it allows the duality of good and evil just as does Christianity.

on sound evidence: Serpent worship was a cult of agriculturalists in which the serpent is helpful. But, generally, the biblical references to serpents depict them as evil or fearsome.¹⁶⁰ Meek cites Deut. 8:15 (which speaks of "fiery serpents" and equates them with scorpions) and Ex. 17:15; 4:25; 15:26; 23:25; Kings 1:9; and Neh 2:13 which are vague passages and subject to interpretations other than Meek's. They hardly substantiate his claim that the Levites were adherents to a serpent cult.

Meek's unconventional assertion that Yahweh was at first an Arabian storm god which Moses adopted (for reasons Meek admits cannot be explained) is another assumption that did not fare well in the light of continued research. There are numerous biblical passages which connect Yahweh with storms but none which limit him to storms. In addition, clouds and rain which Meek associates with Yahweh are universal phenomena and are found in connection with supernatural beliefs around the world.¹⁶¹ More often, Yahweh is pictured as omnipotent, controlling all natural forces. Meek's manipulation of the words 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh into 'ahyeh -- 'asher yiheyeh is unforgivable for a linguist. Albright's translation, "he causes to be"¹⁶² seems more reasonable.

¹⁶⁰Genesis 3; Exodus 7:9ff; Numbers 21:6ff; Deuteronomy 8:15; Isaiah 14:25; 30:6.

¹⁶¹William J. Good, Religion Among the Primitives (New York: The Free Press, 191), p. 234.

¹⁶²Albright, From the Stone Age, p. 259.

New evidence, such as that from Ebla, though far from complete, points to a much broader background for the concept of Yahweh than Meek's Arabian "hwy" thesis. This evidence indicates, rather, a north-west Semitic origin which probably dates much earlier than Moses or even Abraham. The earliest appearance of Yahweh in the biblical narratives smacks of nomadism, as the deity dispenses righteousness rather than fertility. His first abode, the Ark, was housed in a tent which moved with the tribe. The materials used such as acacia wood, ramskins, lambskins, clothes of goat's hair, and such, are all manifestations of nomadic existence.¹⁶³ Portable shrines or sacred tents were still employed among some nomadic Arabs before the time of Muhammed (seventh century of the common era).¹⁶⁴ These do not deny an Arabian background, but neither were they practices limited to the Arabian peninsula. Instead, they were common traditions of nomadic peoples in the entire Near East.

It is possible that the Yahweh cult was strengthened after Moses' flight from Egypt, but that half of the Hebrews recognized any but Yahweh as their high god is pure speculation on the part of Meek. His fancy that the northern tribes primarily followed the bull cult and did not know Yahweh

¹⁶³See Exodus 25 for a description of materials used.

¹⁶⁴Harry Orlinsky, Essays in Biblical Culture and Bible Translation (New York: KATV Publishing House, 1974), p. 29.

before Moses is without foundation. The Moses group likely told their kinsmen of a new side to Yahweh, one that was influenced by their stay in Egypt. It seems illogical to assume that the development of the concept of Yahweh was not affected by Akhenaten's revolutionary religion in the fourteenth century. Meek willingly accepts Egyptian influence in the Egyptian names and cultural practices which the Hebrews adopted, yet denies any effect on Hebrew religion of the pseudo monotheistic ideas developed by Akhenaten. As P. Miller, Jr., a professor at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia points out, "Yahwism did not develop in a vacuum, as is true of all religious phenomena [but] related itself to its context and environment by processes of integration, assimilation, subordination, and rejection".¹⁶⁵ The worship of the Aten in 1350 can be seen as a step toward the monotheism that was to be developed in the following centuries. Both Miller and Jacobsen point out that deity concepts evolve and change with time and circumstances, as does everything else. Meek accepted the apodictic laws as more ancient than the casuistic because they were laws typical of a nomadic existence. Yet he asked his followers to believe that Yahweh was a recent addition to the Hebrew pantheon rather than the more likely notion that Yahweh had been brought from their earliest nomadic days.

¹⁶⁵P. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 59.

There seems little doubt that the united state of Israel was composed of two distinct groups: the northern Israel and the southern Judah, each composed of smaller tribes. Meek uses this to support his claim, noting the diverse traditions which made up the Israelite culture. However, anthropological studies have revealed that these differences may have developed over the years because of geographical separations. Although it is not large, the geography of Syria/Palestine separates it into hill country and plains. Its towns were situated on high places dominating the access roads to other regions. This rendered many areas inaccessible except at times when the towns lost their power. Such a situation results in "pockets" of societies, daughter groups of an original ancestral population which still bore the marks of the original population, but because of lost contact, they developed unique traits, different from their sister groups, yet retained loyalties and common traditions.¹⁶⁶ J. P. Dessel, a Scheuer Fellow at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, is, at the present time, studying these distinctive settlement patterns which he states have been exhibited between the north and the south of Palestine/Syria as early as the Chalcolithic period (5000-3200),¹⁶⁷ long before the nomadic

¹⁶⁶Kottak, Anthropology, p. 260.

¹⁶⁷J. P. Dessel, "The Early Bronze III in Southern Palestine:", American Schools of Oriental Research Newsletter Vol. 37 #3 (April, 1986).

migrations of the-second millenium. This development of customs in "pocket" groups accounts for the varied characteristics exhibited by the north and the south. There is no evidence to support Meek's thesis that the two groups were a result of two separate invasions 200 years apart.

But that at least some of the Hebrews were in Egypt is probable. The biblical story of the rise of Joseph in Pharaoh's court is likely a reflection of the acceptance of Semitic people in Egypt at the time of the Hyksos domination. Meek was right in assuming the Egyptian names of Moses, Assir, Pashur, Hophni, Phinehas, Merar, and Puti-el were evidence of time spent on the Nile. The Moses group must have been comprised mostly of the few clans or tribes that stayed behind after the Hyskos left. It could not have been a large group for, as J. L. McKenzie¹⁶⁸ points out, the biblical total of 600,000 men¹⁶⁸ suggests a total population of 3,000,000 men, women and children. Such a large number of Hebrews in Egypt's delta would have caused an exodus of Egyptians!¹⁶⁹

Meek also failed to deal with any Greek-Levantine¹⁶⁹ interaction which is evident from the Ugaritic writings, and he denied any direct association of the Hebrews with

¹⁶⁸Exodus 12:37.

¹⁶⁹J. L. McKenzie, The Old Testament Without Illusion (Garden City, New York: Image Books, A Division of Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980), p. 90.

the Tigris-Euphrates cultures. Instead, he insisted that Hebrew laws were borrowed from the Canaanite, implying that the Hebrew nation was not an entity until the time of their unification in Canaan. This idea is contrary to the biblical account of Hebrew origination from Ur and Haran, which Meek acknowledged when he agreed that early Hebrews often returned to kin in those areas. Mesopotamian origin for the Hebrews has been further strengthened by new evidence from Ebla which shows that Northwest Semitic traditions were present in Syria as early as 3500.

Whatever their background was, it is clear that Yahweh was central in the formation of the Israelite confederacy. The nation was a social system structured around his cult. The tribes made a deliberate decision to practice a specific way of life which was in overt opposition from the time-honored established ways accepted by the rest of the ancient Near East.¹⁷⁰ Unrelated persons may have been added to the group, but it seems clear that a basic core group had been established earlier in the hill country. Whether in response to Philistine pressure, an expanding population, or both, the covenant at Shechem, though political, was contingent on the unique righteous deity that Yahweh had become.

The eventual separation of Israel and Judah after the death of Solomon was probably not because of the desire

¹⁷⁰Gottwald, Tribes, p. 59.

of the north to return to the Baal cult, as Meek suggests, nor was it the removal of the threat of the Philistines, but was because of the heavy taxes levied on the population to support the nobility, and the extensive building programs initiated by them. The seeming return of Israel to pagan deities (as Meek saw it) was not a return at all, but a continuation of normal cultic practices. The ragings against this practice that are found in the biblical narratives come from the prophets, who, by the time they wrote their castigations (from 300 to 500 years after the formation of the confederacy), were convinced that all of the problems of Israel and Judah came from a falling away of the people from Yahweh and what they believed was a "pure" Mosaic tradition. They were unaware of the Yahweh that existed during the formation of the confederacy.

There seems to be no good reason to rewrite the scriptures, as Meek attempted to do. As Albright noted, many of the biblical narratives seem to be essentially historical. Evidence continues to verify that the situation in the East Mediterranean was surprisingly like that described in the Bible. Studies are also lending truth to other ancient documents such as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey which have been shown to reveal a great deal of real history.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹A. R. Burn, The Pelican History of Greece (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 34.

CONCLUSION

No one has yet been able to paint Hebrew features on any of those faceless persons whom investigations have shown moved into the Syria/Palestine milieu of the second millennium, but there certainly has been a concentrated effort towards this question. It was a study timidly begun by theologians who carefully weighed their theses before offering any but the most traditional interpretations of the biblical narratives. Darwin was censured for his courageous new ideas, and progress toward the discovery of the historicity of the Bible proceeded slowly as a result. For more than fifty years, fundamentalist Christians held back any scholarly advancement.

Theophile J. Meek represents the initial break between the fundamentalists and the new modernists of the 1930's. As an internationally recognized biblical scholar, his works were well received, opening the door to others who dared to follow him. He was, first and foremost, a theologian and a teacher who challenged his students with provocative questions, becoming a major instigator in the historical evaluation of the Bible. His book, Hebrew Origins, was required reading in biblical and ancient Near Eastern classes at universities for over thirty years. He was one of the first scholars in the twentieth century to incorporate anthropology and archaeology with the study of the Bible, which had been considered inerrant by most theologians.

Today, Meek's Hebrew Origins is no longer in print and is considered arcane. The very studies which Meek helped to launch have rendered his theses invalid. His major fault lies in his unyielding attitude toward his theses. Because of their audacity, his theses required a commitment which he was unable to break. He acknowledged new studies such as Kathleen Kenyon's finds at Jericho, but refused to adjust his theory to accommodate the new evidence. Although he was a brilliant linguist, his historical and anthropological knowledge was narrow. Yet, he recognized the need to incorporate fields outside his own to find the truth.

Meek's greatest contribution to the study of the historicity of the Bible was that he was a pacesetter, for he was the first of a line of historians who were not afraid to depart from traditional ideas with their bold new assumptions. Scholars such as John Allegro,¹⁷² Solomon Zeitlin,¹⁷³ Cecil Roth,¹⁷⁴ and Immanuel Velikovsky¹⁷⁵ advanced unorthodox ideas which often drew the ridicule of their contemporaries. These

¹⁷²John Allegro believed Judaism and Christianity stemmed from a Near Eastern cult which used an hallucinatory drug.

¹⁷³Solomon Zeitlin wrote a whacky discourse on the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1960.

¹⁷⁴Cecil Roth suggested that Judas was actually a political revolutionary who through Jesus would lead the revolution.

¹⁷⁵Immanuel Velikovsky went to great lengths to explain his theory that a near collision between earth and a comet was the cause of the supernatural events associated with the Exodus.

scholars stood "sōlis contra mundum" and their innovative ideas did more to shock scholars into new studies than to provide real insight into historical truths. Meek's contribution can be measured by the questions he raised in the minds of serious scholars, the most valuable contribution any teacher can make, for questions lead to further investigation.

In retrospect, Theophile J. Meek's own imaginative ideas on the source of the Hebrew people was, for the most part, in error. However, it must be remembered that, in spite of the scientific nature by which archaeologists now retrieve evidence, historians still explain the evidence as they themselves see it. Meek interpreted the evidence in accordance with his educational, theological, and philosophical background. His ideas, although not accepted by later-scholars, cannot be termed "wrong", just as the theses of his contemporaries and modern scholars cannot be considered "right". The hazy picture of Hebrew origins may be slightly more clear now than it was in the 1950's, but it must still be admitted that all of the ideas advanced so far are speculations, albeit educated ones. On the second page of his book, Hebrew Origins, Meek made a statement which has not yet been disputed: "The more we know, the more we know there is to know".

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